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ANCIENT SIAMESE GOVERNMENT
AND ADMINISTRATION



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BY

H. G. QUARITCH WALES, M.A., Ph.D.

Author of Siamese State Ceremonies



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PREFACE

The object of the present work is to trace the development and as far as possible make plain the working of the ancient Siamese system of government and administration, while incidentally throwing a good deal of light on the whole structure of the society. It may be as well to emphasize here the strictly relative sense in which the term "ancient" can be applied to Siamese political institutions which necessarily could not take definite shape before, at earliest, the appearance of the first independent Siamese kingdom in the thirteenth century A.D.; while the spirit of many of these institutions, even where they themselves have been abolished, continues to this day to exercise its influence on the life and thought of the people. For this reason, therefore, the study of the past may not be unworthy of the attention of those who are concerned with the future of Siam.

On the other hand, though the actual Siamese institutions can claim no great antiquity, and are sometimes even now in effect neither completely dead nor mere survivals without influence on the progress of the nation, yet many of the ideas which underlie them and usages which they embody take us back to a remote period in the social evolution of mankind, and hence are of considerable historical interest. Moreover, they often supply evidence of a kind that may prove to throw light on, or supplement the material that is available for, the study of other similar institutions that have long since passed away in India and other parts of the world.

In the preparation of this work I am above all indebted



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to H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rājanubhāb whose many important essays and commentaries on Siamese history and institutions have done much to facilitate my researches.

I also wish to express my thanks to H.H. Prince Bidyalāṅkaraṇa for kindly giving me the benefit of his advice and assistance.

To my wife I am grateful for her constant interest and intelligent criticism.

H. G. Q. W.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study of the institutions of the Siamese and other similarly constituted peoples of Greater India presents certain difficulties with regard to mode of treatment. On the one hand the technique of the anthropologist cannot always be satisfactorily applied to peoples on this plane of development; while on the other hand to attempt to apply the standards and terminology of European political science, as has been successfully done in the case of Indian institutions, would be grossly misleading. One must bear in mind particularly that one is dealing with a people which, while accepting and applying elaborate administrative methods, largely borrowed or adapted from more advanced civilizations, had little understanding of underlying principles, and no definitely expressed conception of the theory of government or the social order.

It goes without saying that if even in India, the source of Siam's highest cultural aspirations, the deeper problems of political obligation, foundations of the state, or the rights of man received little direct attention,¹ one would certainly not expect to find much in Siam. In India, however, much thought was given to the theory of the governmental act, in combination with ethical influences, resulting in the production of voluminous idealistic treatises setting forth what ought to be. Some of this literature, particularly of the *rājanīti* type, found its way to Siam, and was there held in high esteem by her kings. But it was seldom seriously applied by them

¹ Beni Prasad, *Theory of Government in Ancient India*, p. 335.



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because its dictates were often foreign to Thai¹ custom and because there was no powerful Brahmanic caste to act as a check on the king in such matters. The Siamese language is ill fitted to express abstract thought, and Siamese literature, so much of which is devoted to practical administrative matters, usually hints only vaguely at any underlying principles.

The method of treatment adopted here will therefore aim primarily at endeavouring to make clear the nature of the government and the structure and working of the administrative system, while theoretical ideas will merely be allowed to reveal themselves incidentally, but will nevertheless be found to provide us with material on which to base our conclusions in the final chapter. It is certainly the practical working of the institutions that best repays our study; for, while in India theoretical treatises are so numerous and information of a practical nature so relatively scarce, the contrary is the case in Siam where valuable documents have been preserved which, by the very ingenuousness with which they approach the problems that beset the administration, enable us to form a picture of actual conditions such as is rarely possible in Ancient India.

Since in my former work, *Siamese State Ceremonies*, I have devoted a chapter to an outline of the history of Siamese culture and have considered in some detail the various foreign influences to which primitive Thai institutions had been subjected in the course of time, it will not be necessary to revert to the matter at all fully here. It will suffice to mention those historical events which were of outstanding importance in connection with the present subject, while more detailed

¹ In this work the generally accepted spelling "Thai" is used to express that branch of the Tai race which gave rise to the modern Siamese, the unaspirated form "Tai" being used for the Tai peoples in general.



historical references will be given in their appropriate places in the body of the work.

The particular branch of the Tai race with which we are concerned first reveals itself to us as a tribe of primitive Mongolian nomads making their way southwards in southern China, in response to pressure from the north, and then forming settlements in what is now Siam, but what was then part of the Khmer empire. It was in A.D. 1237 that these tribesmen were able to throw off Khmer suzerainty at Sukhodaya and set up a feudal state under a patriarchal king with the title of Śrī Indrāditya. The great King Rāma Gāmhēn (about 1276-1317) was able to extend the boundaries of this feudal state so widely that it almost certainly included Pegu and Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja; but after his time the kingdom of Sukhodaya lost much of its territory. Some of this was absorbed by the new Thai kingdom of Ayudhyā, founded in A.D. 1350, by a prince who took the title Rāmādhīpatī I. It was destined within a few decades altogether to supplant the older kingdom, and to become the capital of Siam for more than four hundred years.

Even during the later part of the Sukhodaya period contact with superior civilizations and particularly the penetration of Indian cultural influences began to make themselves felt, especially on the character of the kingship; but the old feudal system continued to survive even in the expanding kingdom of Ayudhyā until there occurred in 1431 an event of the highest importance for the political future of Siam. This was the capture of the Khmer capital Añkor Thom by King Paramarāja II, which was accompanied by the influx into the Siamese capital of large numbers of Khmer statesmen and Brahmans. Their influence led this king's successor, King Paramaṭrailokanātha (1448-1488), to



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undertake the complete reorganization of the administration by the adaptation of many Khmer principles and methods to the needs of the growing Thai kingdom. Thus from about this time, as we shall see in the course of this work, there was evolved a more advanced, and eventually, a very highly specialized political system which in part supplanted the old feudalism and in part retained it in a modified form as a subordinate administrative device.

Despite the fact that Ayudhyā was captured by the Burmese in 1569, and that Siam was thereafter overrun by the Burmese for the space of fifteen years, the country was saved from its enemies by the great King Nareśvara; and the system of administration was still further consolidated by the expansion of the power of the central government. The fully developed system thus built up was plainly adapted to the needs of the times and the type of society in relation to which it was framed; and it resulted in the growth of what was, judged by the standards applicable to Further India, a prosperous and powerful kingdom. But it was not long before over-elaboration and many other disruptive elements, which will be analysed in detail in the course of this work, but which for the moment may be summarized by the comprehensive word "decadence", began to make themselves felt and ultimately led to the degeneration of the system. Ayudhyā finally fell to the Burmese in 1767, but the nation again soon found a deliverer in the person of a leader of Chinese extraction named Brahyā Tāk, who rapidly drove out the Burmese and re-established the power of Siam. The ability of the Siamese to recuperate after disasters of this nature is indeed one of their most remarkable characteristics throughout their history. King Tāk set up his capital at Dhanapurī, on the river opposite the present site of



Bangkok, to which latter situation it was transferred on the accession of the founder of the present dynasty, King Rāma I, in 1782.

It was the first object of both King Tāk and the early kings of the present dynasty to restore the national institutions as they had existed before the fall of Ayudhyā, and in this the system of administration was no exception. It was made possible by the recall of officials and Court Brahmins who had held office before the fall of Ayudhyā and had been able to escape from the fury of the Burmese. Many of the valuable archives and other government records had unfortunately been lost in the great fire that had compassed the destruction of the old capital, and the times were ripe for the further spread of that decadence which had already long before set in. Nevertheless the old system persisted until in 1893 came its formal abolition, though not the final eradication of its influence on the development of the modern state of Siam.

There are a few considerations of a general nature which have a bearing on our subject. In the first place there is the territory or material basis of the state, with regard to which the most important points are its extent, its climate, and the nature of the soil. The extent naturally varied with the type of government from the small feudal state of perhaps 10,000 square miles that constituted the Sukhodaya kingdom during the greater part of its brief existence, to the considerably more than 200,000 square miles that, inclusive of tributaries, formed the somewhat overgrown kingdom during the more prosperous portions of the period that followed its achievement of centralized administration. Boundaries were very roughly delimited, vast stretches of mountain and jungle, or at least land that had been laid waste by repeated military expeditions,



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being left uncultivated and unadministered, and serving to some extent as barriers against hostile intrusion. But even though the effective part of the territory, apart from certain coastal regions, was in the main confined to the river valleys of Central Siam, where all the old capitals were situated, its extent was always more than adequate to the needs of the people, partly on account of their relatively small numbers and partly on account of the fertility of the soil. The hot, damp climate of the central lowlands naturally had a deleterious effect upon the vigour of the Thai as they came down from the uplands of the north. This, coupled with the ease with which the great rice producing plains of the Mēnām valley responded to the slightest efforts of the cultivator, and the fact that failure of the rice crop was practically unknown, naturally affected the character of the society and its administration, and eventually led to the more arduous undertaking of commerce getting largely into the hands of immigrant Chinese and other foreigners. Rice being the staple diet of the people, the Siamese freeman seems always to have possessed the right to demand from the state, under certain easily fulfilled conditions, as much rice land as he and his family could cultivate, only the rarer forest and mineral products having formed royal monopolies; and, until in modern times rice came to be grown for export, agricultural labours seem to have weighed but lightly on the people, for, as the Siamese proverb puts it, "satiated kine stop grazing."

There was another factor which to some extent counteracted the debilitating effects of the climate and a too generous share of Nature's bounty. The peoples of Further India, though by nature unwarlike, were quite unable to live at peace with one another, and being unable to apply the idealist teachings of Ancient



India that diplomacy is preferable to open warfare, were almost continually in conflict. Siam was no exception in this respect with the result that heavy demands in personal service and food-stuffs were made upon the people, usually during the dry season when the crops were garnered and climatic conditions were favourable for military expeditions. It was usually after long spells of peace, or when during the latter part of the Ayudhyā period money payments came to be accepted in lieu of personal service to the state, that the country was most at the mercy of foreign invasion owing to the removal of the check on the debilitating effect of climate and fertility of soil.

Religion is also a factor of considerable importance and there is no doubt that Buddhism, the national religion of the Siamese, played its part in inculcating a spirit of charity and an interest in promoting the popular welfare into the minds of the more pious of Siamese kings; and perhaps in almost all cases it acted as a moral check on despotism. It profoundly affected for the good the relations of the people in their private dealings with one another; but the spirit of charity which forbade taking the life of an insect was not carried so far as to respect either the lives or the property of enemies of the state, and in time of war the religious edifices erected by pious Buddhists of an alien nation were ruthlessly destroyed. So far as our present subject is concerned, perhaps the greatest practical effect of Buddhism was the heavy expenditure that was incurred by the government and the onerous demands that were made on the people's personal services, second only to those demanded by war, for the erection of countless shrines and monasteries; while at all times a considerable proportion of the country's manhood was exempted from both military and civil service by the highly



developed institution of monasticism. That other great Indian religion, Hinduism, played an important part in connection with the conception of kingship and the character of the government, while Brahman *purohitas* had a share in the administration. But nothing in the nature of a powerful Brahmanic caste exercising a formidable check on the kingship ever existed in Siam.

Perhaps the most important of these general considerations is that which concerns population. On account of the agricultural occupation of the people, this was mainly scattered throughout the country in small villages. We have no estimate as to the population of Siam earlier than the close of the seventeenth century, though Mr. Wood estimates¹ that the population of Ayudhyā in 1545 was 150,000; and the whole population of the country may not have been so very much less than it is at the present time, before it was decimated by the Burmese invasions of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1688 La Loubère states that the persons mentioned on the government rolls, which were at least supposed to be very carefully kept, were said to number only 1,900,000, but this would probably not include certain classes of slaves, and there would also be a considerable number of people who had taken refuge in the jungle to escape the *corvées*. Bastian,² quoting from a Siamese record, gives the number of persons marked on the rolls in 1829 as 4,000,000, while in 1863 he states that there were 20,000 persons, probably of the male sex, over 70 years of age in the country, who were brought together to receive the royal bounty. Apparently neither the estimates of La Loubère nor Bastian include the Lao and Malay tributary states. At the present time the population

¹ Wood, p. 104.

² Bastian, p. 164.



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of the whole kingdom amounts to over 12,000,000 of which about 500,000 are in Bangkok and its suburbs ; but about a quarter of the latter figure represents immigrant Chinese whose influx dates from comparatively modern times. We know that in its early years the Sukhodaya kingdom was fed by streams of Tai immigrants fleeing before the hordes of Kublai Khan who had conquered the early Tai kingdom of Nanchao in the region of Yunnan. It was probably these resources that enabled the kings of Sukhodaya to withstand the still considerable power of the Khmer empire. But in later centuries, after this stream had ceased to flow, the Burmese invasions were the means of despoiling Siam of large numbers of her people who were driven off into captivity, especially from the outlying provinces, though it is true that this loss was from time to time in part compensated by successful Siamese expeditions into Burma and by the influx of Peguan refugees. Loss of population by captivity was infinitely more serious than the comparatively small numbers of those killed in actual fighting. Added to this was the fact that many people sought refuge in the jungle from service in the *corvées* or from oppression by provincial officials ; while a large proportion of the able-bodied men were abstracted from service to the state by reason of their being members of the Buddhist Order. One must also bear in mind the high rate of infant mortality which prevailed until recent times and was particularly traceable to the injurious custom which required both mothers and newly born infants to be roasted for many days before a great fire. The combined effect of these conditions was such as to make, as we shall see in the course of our study, the preservation of the nation's man-power one of the chief preoccupations of the Siamese government. That



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their efforts were crowned with little success was due to their inability and unwillingness to remove, even where they were well known, the true causes of the problem. Indeed one of the main results of a narrow-minded policy was that Siam remained with insufficient population to develop her resources to the full.

With regard to our sources of study, it is perhaps not too much to say that the field is almost a virgin one so far as the serious efforts of modern European scholars are concerned. Such researches as they have undertaken have indeed as yet been mainly confined to the purely legal sphere as represented by the recent work of Dr. Lingat and M. Burnay, of the Siamese Ministry of Justice. It is not remarkable that nineteenth-century writers failed to understand the Siamese political organization as it then existed, because it had already become so degenerate as to defy the comprehension of those whose efforts were confined to personal observation unaccompanied by a critical study of Siamese literature. However, the learned Dr. Bastian, who appears to have had some access to Siamese written sources, has placed on record in his *Reisen in Siam* a large number of random and disconnected facts the value of which it is evident that he himself can hardly have appreciated, but which are now in fact of considerable interest. Certain articles in the *Bangkok Calendar*, and two papers by Lieut.-Col. Low, *On the Government of Siam* and *On the Laws of Mu'ung Thai or Siam*, though of little scientific value, are certainly worthy of mention as pioneer efforts. On the other hand, the careful and accurate observations of La Loubère, ambassador of Louis XIV, referring to the latter part of the seventeenth century when Siamese institutions were less decadent than they afterwards became, are of the utmost importance because this writer was free



from the political and religious bias which characterizes the writings of most of the contemporary travellers, who were chiefly disgruntled merchants and missionaries who saw in the institutions of Siam only manifestations of Oriental despotism and oppression unworthy of serious consideration.

Our ultimate source for the study of early Siamese institutions must always be Siamese literature. For the early period when Sukhodaya was capital there are inscriptions, notably the famous one of King Rāma Gāmhēn, which throw a good deal of light on the state of society. But for the Ayudhyā period our great mine of information is the ancient Siamese law texts, supplemented to some extent by references to the *Annals of Ayudhyā* and other chronicles and by a considerable number of valuable documents of a miscellaneous nature that have survived from the Ayudhyā period, of which particular attention must be called to those of which full translations are given at the end of Chapter V. Though the earliest Siamese law texts appear from the dates mentioned in their preambles to have been promulgated in the fourteenth century by the founder of Ayudhyā, I shall show in Chapter VII that this theory is untenable and that none of these laws was promulgated prior to the fifteenth century. In general, indeed, it may be said, that as a result of repeated revisions, they present a picture of the state of society in the eighteenth century when decadence was already far advanced. But only in general. The great value of these law texts is that they retain passages and allusions in their midst which enable us to reconstruct the condition of society in the sixteenth, fifteenth, fourteenth, and even earlier centuries. In this work of reconstruction, however, our success must depend almost entirely on our ability to apply the most critical standards of research, for it is



rarely that we are able to supplement the indications of these law texts by reliable dated references in the chronicles. It would indeed be easy to point to examples of historical research, the value of which has been completely stultified by taking these law texts at their face value.

Second only in importance to the early Siamese documents themselves are the valuable records of research undertaken in recent years by H.R.H. Prince Damrong, who was himself occupied during many years in carrying into effect as Minister of the Interior the reforms initiated by his brother King Rāma V. A list of those of this great scholar's works which bear on the subject of the present study will be found in the Bibliography. A work by King Rāma V himself, which has been of value to me in studying the final period of decadence, is that enlightened monarch's *Speech on the recent Changes in the Administration*, in which he set forth and explained in 1893 the reforms he was then initiating, and also gave interesting retrospective notes. In regard to this important speech one must, however, bear in mind the fact that, degenerate though the old system then undoubtedly was, the king would be likely to over-rather than to under-estimate the defects of a system he was determined to abolish.

From the point of view of comparative study, since the influence of Burmese culture on Siam was negligible, the most important works are those of Leclère, which deal with the political institutions and laws of Cambodia, mainly as established in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The modern Cambodians, though they preserve some ancient cultural features that they never passed on to Siam, in the main look upon Siam as the continuator of their ancient traditions and have, therefore, in later times largely sought to imitate her. In the



sphere of political institutions it is particularly important to remember that in later centuries Cambodia frequently occupied the position of a vassal to Siam and had many late Siamese usages foisted upon her. Thus, except for the preservation of a few interesting ancient survivals, the modern Cambodian administration appears to be mainly a debased and degenerate form of the late Siamese system; but this very relationship has made the researches of Leclère of frequent value to me in arriving at the explanation of certain Siamese usages and laws. The critical study of the latter-day Cambodian administration can, however, do little beyond lead one by a roundabout way to the late Siamese model; and it throws little light on the institutions of the ancient Khmer empire. Since the direct attack on this subject by means of the early Khmer inscriptions has unfortunately proved almost barren of result, it is probable that the indirect approach via the earlier Siamese institutions—and particularly via the Siamese administration as reorganized in the fifteenth century, owing much as it did to direct contemporary Khmer inspiration—may prove the most fruitful line of study; and this probability certainly gives added interest to our present inquiry.



CHAPTER II

THE MONARCHY

When in A.D. 1237 the Thai threw off the yoke of the Khmers at Sukhodaya, they established a simple patriarchal form of monarchy. This must have been essentially similar to that by which were governed other independent states, such as Nanchao, which the originally nomadic Tai had from time to time been able to establish since when, in the first century B.C., they began to move southwards in southern China. The organization of these early Tai states seems to have had much in common with that found in early Vedic times in India, and indeed in similar stages of development in other parts of the world ; but whereas Nanchao acquired a veneer of Chinese civilization as a result of its environment, the Tai who moved further south into the territory of the Khmer empire soon began to absorb elements of later Indian culture. Perhaps nothing could better illumine the early patriarchal nature of society at Sukhodaya than the following passage from King Rāma Gāmhēn's inscription of A.D. 1293 :—

“My father's name was Śrī Indrāditya, my mother's was Nāñ So'añ, and my elder brother's was Pāñ Mo'añ. We were five children born from the same mother : three sons and two daughters. Our eldest brother died when he was still young. . . . During my father's lifetime I served my father, I served my mother. If I obtained game or fish I used to bring it to my father ; if I had any fruit, sour or sweet, savoury and tasteful, I used to bring it to my father. If I hunted elephants and caught any, I brought them to my father. If I went to



attack a village or town and brought back elephants, boys, girls, silver or gold, I gave them to my father. When my father died there remained to me only my elder brother. I continued to serve my elder brother as I had served my father. When my elder brother died I inherited the entire kingdom.”¹

The mention of King Śrī Indrāditya's five children, all born from the same mother, suggests monogamy; while the whole passage conjures up a picture of simple patriarchal life in which respect for parents and the family bond were the strongest factors and were no doubt an inheritance of the Thai from their Mongolian ancestors. We have indeed ample evidence that in the first free Siamese kingdom society resembled a large family under the paternal rule of its king, who as father of his people combined all the functions of government in his own person; and the manner in which he performed these various functions will receive attention in subsequent chapters. Since, however, the nomadic stage was over, the bond of kinship had come to be supplemented by the bond of territory or neighbourhood; and this resulted, as we shall see, in the growth of a feudal organization.

The people at this early stage were of necessity primarily organized for warfare, and this condition was also one to promote monarchy rather than other forms of government. As in Ancient India² no clear concept of the state emerged in Siam until very modern times; and, since the government was always monarchical, the term “king” was really synonymous with government and state. The king was the leader and protector of his people in war and their ruler in time of peace, but as yet the theory of divine kingship was undeveloped. In the later inscriptions of Sukhodaya more Khmer and

¹ Cœdès, i, p. 44.

² Beni Prasad, op. cit., p. 8.



Indian terms are introduced, and this is accompanied by the development of royal ceremonial and possibly the beginnings of administrative specialization.

The growth of this foreign influence increased after the foundation of Ayudhyā, though it was not until the Siamese captured Añkor Thom in A.D. 1431 and transported many Khmer Brahmans and officials to Ayudhyā, that Khmer ideas of government were adopted on a large scale, though not to the exclusion of purely Thai conceptions, the two in fact being fused to form a new system. It may also have been about this time that the Siamese idea of the divine kingship was evolved, a subject with which I have dealt in detail in *Siamese State Ceremonies*. Here, therefore, the matter need only be briefly discussed, and from a somewhat different point of view.

The Khmer cult of the Deva-rāja, or Royal God, a highly specialized form of an earlier Indian conception of divine kingship, in which the king was to some extent identified with the Hindu gods Śiva and Viṣṇu, may have been known to the Siamese in the latter part of the Sukhodaya period, but no doubt it obtained a firmer foothold among them after their conquest of Añkor Thom. At the Siamese capital it came in contact with Hīnayāna Buddhism, which had been accepted as the national Siamese religion at least since the time of Rāma Gāmhēn, and which also had its ideas of divine kingship, regarding the king as a Bodhisattva. The two theories were in no way inimical and they continued to thrive together, the Court Brahmans surrounding the king with Hindu ritual, especially on the occasion of his coronation when the chief deities, and more particularly Śiva, were invited down to the earth to become merged in the person of the crowned king; while at the same time the common people and Buddhist monks more



generally regarded the king as a Bodhisattva. A few kings favoured Brahmanism more than Buddhism but this was exceptional.

The combination of these two theories profoundly affected the early Thai conception of the monarchy, producing a degree of absolutism perhaps even greater than that of the Khmer kings and certainly such as was rarely, if ever, reached in India where, owing to the existence of local self-government, the masses of the people were seldom so inarticulate and helpless, while the powerful caste of the Brahmans exercised a strong check on despotic rule. There were also a number of expedients which further contributed to the strengthening of the Siamese king's power by surrounding his office with an air of mystery and sanctity. These included various taboos of a kind usually associated with divine kingship; the introduction by the captured Khmer officials of a special court language (*rājāśāpda*) in which, when addressing the king or princes, words of the common language were avoided; and the elaboration of royal pomp and ceremonial. The relationship between the Khmer king and his subject was that of master and servant, and it came largely to influence the old Thai relationship of father and son; but perhaps it never entirely superseded it even with the sternest of Siamese rulers, and, with the advent of the Bangkok period, the paternal theory of government experienced a marked revival, culminating in the reign of King Rāma V, who ruled as a true father of his people.

The actual condition of the masses, however, must at all times have depended primarily on the personal character and inclination of the individual monarch; for one must emphasize the fact that the king's power was so absolute that it depended on him alone as to whether he should treat his subjects as children or as



servants. The absolutism of the Siamese *cāu jivitra* (lord of lives) was indeed so extreme and has so few parallels outside Further India that it is not easily appreciated by the European of the twentieth century. Not only had he absolute power over the lives of every one of his subjects, the highest prince as well as the most humble slave, but every one was accustomed to render unquestioning obedience to his lightest wish whatever the cost might be. Nevertheless there were certain checks against too great a misuse of the royal power, such as the fear of rebellion and palace intrigue. The very supremacy of the king made his position one of extreme isolation and, though he might care little for the individual, he dared not antagonize his Court or people as a whole. Princes, ministers and palace officials indeed, who were likely to be the instigators of revolt if dissatisfied with their lot, were too closely associated with the king to be really very deeply imbued with the common belief in his divinity, and hence the king's power to control them depended on his personality. Usually, however, the combination among the courtiers, so necessary to effective action, was lacking in an environment where mutual suspicion ruled the day; and courtiers were more likely to seek preferment by revealing the existence of a plot to the king than by aiding in its execution. At the same time, the masses of the people in general interested themselves little in the fate of an individual king and took no part in a palace revolution: "Being resolved to bear the same Yoke under any Prince whatever—and having the assurance of not being able to bear a heavier—they concern not themselves in the Fortune of their Prince: and experience evinces that upon the least trouble they let the Crown go, to whom Force or Policy will give it."¹

¹ L. L., p. 106.



Drastic methods of ridding the country of a harsh tyrant were thus seldom carried into effect, except in the case of extreme oppression. Then they were facilitated by the fact that the Siamese masses always paid respect to the office rather than to the man who filled it, and so it was possible for them to be led to believe that the divine essence had forsaken an unrighteous monarch.

Attachment to the charitable principles of the Buddhist religion also in some measure acted as a moral control on the king, while the old Indian *daśarājadhamma*, or ten rules for the conduct of kings,¹ were not wholly ignored. The existence of these various checks, however, hardly modifies what has been said above as to the absolute nature of the king's despotic power. In later chapters we shall study in more detail the manner in which the king used this power and performed his functions in connection with the various branches of the administration.

The succession to the Siamese throne was in theory regulated by the *Palatine Law* of A.D. 1458,² where it is laid down that the eldest son of the queen (the superior queen if there were more than one) should be the heir. Possibly this is a relic of an ancient system of recognized matriarchy, and we shall see that the rank of princes depended on that of their mothers; but if a system of matriarchy did thus survive, people were not conscious of its action and it was certainly not taken into account by Siamese kings who frequently attempted to insure the passing of the succession to a favourite son whatever his birth, or when again, the king's sons being minors, it was necessary to nominate a brother as heir. Plans were also frequently upset by

¹ Almsgiving, observation of the commandments, liberality, justice, kindness, endurance, freedom from anger, freedom from cruelty, restraint of heart, care not to give offence by language.

² Bradley, ii, p. 92.



the king's sons fighting together for the throne after their father's death, which event was indeed quite commonly followed by a short but sharp palace struggle, the repercussions of which, however, rarely affected the peace of the people at large.

In Cambodia, according to Leclère,¹ the crown is hereditary in the royal family but without order of primogeniture, sex or parentage. On the death of a king his successor was elected from among the royal family by the high officials, though once selected the king was absolute. There is no trace of such a procedure ever having been followed in Siam. Again, according to the same authority,² the king of Cambodia's right over his kingdom was merely that of a usufructuary since he succeeded not by right of birth but by the will of the high officials, who elected him on behalf of the people and who had power to elect his successor. One cannot accept this view as applied to the Siamese monarchy since the officials in Siam had no right to influence the succession, although in fact they sometimes did champion the cause of one prince against another after the death of a king. The ceremonial offering by the high officials of the wealth of the kingdom to the king at the time of his coronation, whereupon he immediately returns it to the care of the officials and confirms them in their offices, a ceremony common to both Siam and Cambodia, is interpreted in Siam as a method of impressing on the officials that they hold their power and perquisites from the reigning king and not from his predecessor. This is, however, interpreted by Leclère as signifying that the Cambodian king holds his power and wealth from the high officials—an idea impossible in Siam. More probably the ceremony definitely indicates that the officials, not the king, are usufructuaries.

¹ Leclère (1), pt. i, Chs. 2 and 3.

² Leclère (1), p. 32.



CHAPTER III

CLASSES OF THE PEOPLE

Siamese social differentiation stopped at class because the Hindu institution of caste never obtained a hold on the Siamese people as it did to a certain extent on the Khmers. Even class was largely fluid and unstable since royalty was merged with the commonality after the fifth generation; there was, at least in later times, no hereditary nobility; while the majority of the members of the Buddhist Order and a large proportion of the slaves were only temporarily abstracted from the main mass of freemen. The great levelling features which militated against the formation of caste, or even the stability of class, were the influence of Buddhism and the absolute power of the monarchy, the latter naturally unwilling to tolerate such dangerous developments. Once the theory of the divine kingship had been fully evolved, the status of every one of the king's subjects from the highest prince downwards, in relation to the king, was but as dust, and the terms *kḥā fāu* and *kḥā hlvañ*, applied to courtiers and royal commissioners of the highest rank and having the literal meaning "royal slaves", were not merely expressions of empty flattery.

Despite these conditions, the respect due to royal blood and religion demanded privileges for the royal family and the monks. Again, even in the earliest period of which we have knowledge, the king was unable to administer the whole of his kingdom himself, and this necessitated the existence of a class of nobles; while the fully developed administration required the services

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of a numerous official class. These nobles and officials could not have hoped to function properly had not their position and the respect due to it been clearly marked by the conferment of appropriate privileges. Thus there grew up classes whose privileges were very real and so, while bearing in mind the fact that individuals of every class were alike of equally little account in the sight of the king, in the present chapter we shall endeavour to study the character and organization of both privileged and unprivileged classes of the society, and the nature of their relationship to one another and to the monarchy, with special regard to the part that each played in connection with the administrative system.

1. *The Royal Family.*

It would appear from the passage of King Rāma Gāmhèn's inscription that we quoted in the last chapter, (p. 14) that Siamese kings in the early part of the Sukhodaya period were monogamous, and since to this day the Lao usually follow this custom there is reason to believe that it was characteristic of the early Tai peoples. In course of time the harem was introduced along with other Indian institutions, particularly in royal or noble families, and since its members were of unequal rank it led to complications in relationship. In the middle of the fifteenth century, according to the *Palatine Law* of A.D. 1458,¹ the system was still fairly simple, five classes of princes being enumerated as follows :—

(1) Sons of the king by a queen of the highest rank (*argamaheṣī*), termed *samtec hnò brah buddha cāu* "most excellent buds of the enlightened lord". A prince of this rank would be heir apparent.

¹ Bradley, ii, p. 92.



(2) Sons of the king by an inferior queen (*mè yua mo'an*), called *brah mahā uparāja*. Failing a prince of the first class, one of this class was made heir apparent. It is curious that the title *uparāja*, which in Ancient India was always used with reference to an heir apparent, was in Siam in the fifteenth century used for any prince of the second class, and this may either have arisen through a misunderstanding of Indian usages or a deliberate preference for an old Thai term for the heir apparent. It is significant that in later centuries the title *brah mahā uparāja* reverted to its original Indian meaning and was used by the Siamese to denote a prince who was heir apparent whether he belonged to the first or second class.¹

(3) Sons of the king by a princess, herself the daughter of a king (*lūk hlvañ*), termed *lūk hlvañ ek* "first class royal children".

• (4) Sons of the king by a princess, herself the granddaughter of a king (*hlān hlvañ*), called *lūk hlvañ* "royal children".

(5) Sons of the king by concubines (*brah sanam*), called *brah yauvarāja* "royal youths".

A good deal of trustworthy information on the subject of the royal family is contained in an interesting essay,² which was evidently inspired by a cultured Siamese authority. From this it appears that the term *cāu fā* was originally reserved for neither the highest nor the lowest princes but for those of the third and fourth classes who actually governed provinces, the term meaning literally "prince from the skies" or "prince ruler", and being the same as the Burmese and Shan *tsau bōa*. After a time kings, for reasons of security,

¹ Prince Damrong discusses this matter at some length in his work (1), pp. 635 sqq.

² Gibert.



ceased to exalt their wives to the overpowering rank of queen; and as thus no sons of the king were born of higher class than *cầu fã*, that term came to signify princes of the highest degree. When again some of the king's wives were once more raised to queenly rank their children were also called *cầu fã* and so the term became, and has remained, applicable to princes of the best birth. Thus was evolved a complicated system which was probably perfected by the middle of the sixteenth century and has since held good. No law describes it in full but historical references and modern practice enable us to understand it. Its main features will now be described.

The children of the king by a queen or princess were *cầu fã* though of somewhat different classes as determined by the rank of the mother, while the children of the king by a concubine were known as *brah anga cầu*. The offspring of both *cầu fã* and *brah anga cầu* princes by mothers who were either *brah anga cầu* or *hmodm cầu* princesses, or concubines, were *hmodm cầu*; the children of a *hmodm cầu* prince were known as *hmodm rãja vaṇṣa*, and the children of *hmodm rãja vaṇṣa* as *hmodm hlvani*. After this, the fifth generation, royal descent is extinguished and the children are commoners. In addition to the natural inheritance of royal rank by right of birth as above described, the relatives of a king at his succession or at the foundation of a dynasty were appointed to the appropriate ranks, while at any time a *hmodm cầu* might be promoted as a reward for merit to the grade of *brah anga cầu*. A further series of titles is expressive of the exact relationship of princes and princesses of the rank of *brah anga cầu* to the king. Thus *brah cầu parama vaṇṣa dhoe* refers to uncles or aunts of *dhoe* (him) the king, and *brah cầu lưk jãy dhoe* to sons of *dhoe* (him) the king. *Cầu fã* princes and princesses also used



these titles, those of the higher classes being allowed to prefix the honorific *samtec*. Yet another and finer gradation of princely rank was attained by the allocation of *śākti nā* grade which will be explained in a later section of this chapter, but which may for the moment be regarded as the allocation of a certain number of marks of dignity. Thus *cầu fã* of the higher classes had 15,000 or 20,000 dignity marks; *brah aṅga cầu*, 1,500 to 7,000; *hmòm cầu*, 1,500; *hmòm rāja vaṇṣa*, 500; and *hmòm hlvan*, 200 marks.

These ranks controlled the order of precedence on all occasions, a child of a higher rank having precedence over an older relative of the lower. Princes of *cầu fã* rank had large pecuniary allowances and far more exalted privileges than had those of lower rank, being preceded on land by a band of spearmen and on the water by escort barges, while they alone could be anointed from the coronation conch. They could use teapots, betel boxes, and other insignia of enamelled gold, while other princes and officials were permitted only the use of plain gold insignia. From the cradle they were attended by special musicians who played the music reserved for kings, by the Brahmans chanting their *mantras*, and by nurses of high degree; while their tonsure, bathing, and finally their cremation ceremonies were on a scale of the utmost magnificence. The *brah aṅga cầu* and *hmòm cầu* also had considerable privileges and allowances, but the *hmòm rāja vaṇṣa* and *hmòm hlvan* were not considered as princes, but merely as scions of the royal stock. They had no princely privileges beyond a small pension, they entered the government service as pages like the sons of high officials, and took their position at royal audiences among the pages, not with the princes. On being given even small official posts they dropped their titles of royalty.

We now come to consider the administrative duties of the princes and their official ranks as distinct from the birth or family ranks that we have just discussed. During the later part of the Sukhodaya period and about the first two hundred years of the Ayudhya period, it would seem that the duties of princes were as is laid down in the *Palatine Law*.¹ That is to say the sons of queens were obliged to live at ease in the capital where they were under the control of the king (though apparently the heir apparent was often given the government of a province); the *lūk hlvañ ek* and *lūk hlvañ* were appointed to rule over first and second class provinces respectively; while the *brah̃ yauvarāja* did not receive such appointments. This custom of appointing princes to govern certain provinces, which they did with almost royal pomp as semi-independent states, prevailed, at least in the case of the more distant provinces, until nearly the end of the sixteenth century, after which it was abandoned owing to the trouble brought upon the country through the constant warring together of these powerful princes over the succession, on the death of a king.

In the reign of King Paramatrailokanātha, as we know from the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy* of A.D. 1454, another system was introduced as a result of Khmer influence and it came gradually entirely to supersede the earlier one. According to this system princes were appointed to the titular headship of the departments (*kram*) into which the work of the central administration was for the first time divided in this reign. The princes were then said to have *kram* rank which was of seven grades, as follows ²:—

(1) *Kram brah̃ rāja vāñ pavara sathāna maṅgala fāy nā*, or more shortly *vāñ nā* (front palace), the title having

¹ Bradley, ii, p. 92.

² Gibert.



arisen from the position of this prince's palace at Ayudhyā. Titles were sometimes thus taken from the names of the old palaces which often had better established names than had their occupants. The office to which this title was attached was also known as *braḥ pāṇḍūlya*, and to Europeans commonly as "second king". The holder of the office was originally a general of the vanguard. Sometimes there were two princes of this rank at the same time.

(2) *Kram braḥ rāja vāṇ pavara sathāna bhimukha fāy hlāṇ*, or shortly *vāṇ hlāṇ* (rear palace), a duplicate "second king", originally chief of the rearguard. As a rule there was only one prince of this rank.

(3) *Kram samtec braḥ*.

(4) *Kram braḥ*.

(5) *Kram hlvaṇ*.

(6) *Kram khun*.

(7) *Kram hmū'n*.

It appears that holders of the third and fourth ranks were rarely appointed, while there were not more than four of each of the lower ranks. Holders of all *kram* ranks below the first and second grades became the titular heads of some government department, although the actual duty of controlling the work of the department was mainly in the hands of certain officials as will be described later. The men attached to the *kram* or government department were originally the whole body of retainers owing allegiance to the prince, and for whose services in time of peace and war the prince, under the old feudal conditions, was in turn responsible to the king. The prince himself received a share in the personal services of the men of his *kram* and of the revenue collected by his officials, whereas princes not of *kram* rank only received comparatively small allowances; but as they wanted to live in the same style as



kram princes they often either went in for commerce, or contrived to oppress the poor whom they could manage to overawe by reason of their rank. All princes from *hmiòm cẩu* upwards were eligible for appointment to *kram* rank, though a *cẩu fã*² prince could not be given the lowest rank of *kram hmiũ'n*, and the higher class *kram* ranks were seldom conferred on any below first class *brah aṅga cẩu* of the reigning king's family. *Cẩu fã* princes retained the long high-sounding titles given to them on the occasion of their river-bathing or tonsure ceremonies, and attached to it the name of their department; other princes dropped their personal names and took the style of the department, preceding it by the term *nai kram*, meaning the one who is in the *kram* (office). The particular *kram* rank to which a prince was appointed corresponded to the relative importance of the *kram* of which he was made the titular head. Princes of *kram* rank received special gold insignia, crowns, swords, and palanquins, while another very important distinction between these princes and those not appointed to *kram* rank was, as we know from the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy*,¹ the very great increase in the number of *sãkti nã* marks allotted to them after appointment. Thus, for example, a *cẩu fã*² brother of the king was promoted from 20,000 to 50,000; a *cẩu fã*² son of the king from 15,000 to 40,000; a *brah aṅga cẩu* from 7,000 or 6,000 (brother or son of the king respectively) to 15,000; and a *hmiòm cẩu* from 1,500 to 4,000. In the earlier period, when *cẩu fã* princes were appointed to govern provinces, they received a *sãkti nã* grade of 50,000, whether uncle, brother, son, or nephew of the king. Despite the great importance attached to *kram* rank, however, it was not taken into consideration in questions concerning precedence, which depended solely

¹ Bradley, i, p. 124.



on family rank ; and in the eyes of the people a prince was always esteemed in proportion to the relative purity of the royal blood of the mother and the closeness of her relationship to the king.

The two higher *kram* ranks differ very greatly from the others, since princes appointed to these ranks were invested with some of the attributes characteristic of kingship. Instead of being in charge of a government department, their titles indicated that they were heads of "the department of the royal front palace" or of "the department of the royal rear palace" as the case might be, that is to say, of their own particular palace with a numerous body of retainers and household officials of all ranks. Another royal attribute that they enjoyed was that their children were *brah̃ aṅga cāu*, though not of the highest class, and could even be created by the king *cāu fā* of a lower class, and they had appropriate *śākti nā* grade varying from 1,500 to 4,000. Their *śākti nā* grade was proportionately increased on their appointment to *kram* rank, but they were seldom promoted above the rank of *kram hmū'n*.

The status of the *Vāñ Nā* was vastly superior to that of the *Vāñ Hlāñ*, and his attributes approached more nearly to those associated with kingship. He had almost unlimited access to the treasury, and the ritual accompanying his investment was similar to that in use at the king's coronation, though on a less elaborate scale. The king himself handed the regalia, which included an umbrella of five tiers, to the *Vāñ Nā*, but the ceremonial bath and state progress were omitted. Only in the case of the *Vāñ Nā* of the fourth reign of the Bangkok dynasty were the latter rites allowed, as a special mark of the king's respect and affection ; and the *Vāñ Nā* then, for the only time in the Bangkok period, actually merited the term "second king" that has always been applied



to the office by Europeans. A command of this "second king" was also referred to as an *oṅkāra*, while the command of a *Vāṇ Nā* had in all other cases been distinguished by the inferior term *pāṇḍūlya*, the relative degree of importance of the commands of the *Vāṇ Hlān* and of other princes also being indicated by appropriate terms. Once also in the Ayudhyā period was the *Vāṇ Nā* treated as a king. That was in the case of the future King Ekādaśaraṭha who was so treated during the reign of his brother King Nareśvara as a mark of the latter's high esteem.¹ A further distinction between the office of the *Vāṇ Nā* and that of true kingship is exhibited by the fact that on appointment the prince received a *śākti nā* grade of 100,000, the highest in the kingdom, but still infinitely inferior to the king's dignity which was beyond all computation. But these distinctions were not merely theoretical. History supplies ample evidence in support of our contention that the *Vāṇ Nā*, like every other subject of the realm, is to be regarded as a member of the "classes of the people" and not as in any way encroaching upon the supreme power of the government as represented by the monarchy. The very great power that he wielded was his only by the will of the king, and, like every other official, he was liable to instantaneous removal from office. For example, in A.D. 1756, King Paramakoṣa, finding that the *Vāṇ Nā* was carrying on an intrigue with two of the king's wives, of *cāu fā* rank, ordered him to be scourged two hundred and thirty times, and he expired after the one hundred and eightieth stroke.² It was usual, however, for the king and the *Vāṇ Nā* to work together in perfect harmony, each having little to gain and much to lose by antagonizing the other.

In searching for the underlying reason for princes

¹ Prince Damrong (1), p. 642.

² AA., ii, pp. 242-4.



of the two higher *kram* ranks being allowed some of the attributes of kingship, one must bear in mind that they were always appointed from among those relatives of the king who were most nearly related to him, and thus had the purest royal blood, in fact those who by birth approached most nearly to kingly rank. These would be the sons of the queen or queens if they existed, one of whom would be heir apparent (*brah mahā uparāja*). As mentioned in the previous chapter, only in exceptional circumstances, as where the king's sons were minors, was a brother of the king appointed, the only case of this kind in the Ayudhyā period being that of the future King Ekādaśaraṭha during the reign of his brother King Nareśvara.¹ It was on account of the appointment to the highest *kram* rank of the *Brah Mahā Uparāja*, the one who would eventually reign as king, that the office of *Vāñ Nā* became in appearance so closely allied to true kingship. The two offices came in fact to be regarded as one and the same by both Siamese and Europeans, but there is strong evidence in favour of the contention here advanced that they were originally distinct. The *Vāñ Nā* is traditionally supposed by the Siamese to have been originally the general in command of the vanguard (as the *Vāñ Hlāñ* was of the rearguard). This would date from the time of the introduction of the *kram* system from Cambodia in the reign of King Paramatrailokanātha, and it fits in with the fact that the other princes of *kram* rank were put in charge of departments, or *krams*, which had originally been organized bodies of retainers, though Prince Damrong is of opinion ² that the second of these two higher *kram* ranks was not introduced from Cambodia until as late as the reign of King Cākṛabarti. On the other hand, the office of *Brah Mahā Uparāja*, which

¹ Prince Damrong (1), loc. cit.

² Prince Damrong (1), p. 640.



depends on right of birth, is far more ancient, and is of course well known in early Indian literature, the *uparājābhīṣeka* corresponding to the *yauvarājābhīṣeka* of the Epics. Though the office is not specifically mentioned in the laws before the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy* of A.D. 1454, nor in the *Annals of Ayudhyā* before A.D. 1484, there are indications in the inscriptions that it existed even in the time of Sukhodaya.

With regard to the ladies of the royal family it has already been mentioned that the princesses received the same family rank and *śākti nā* grade as if they had been princes, and they could be promoted in the same manner. They were also appointed to *kram* rank (other than the two higher grades) and, being thus the titular heads of government departments, derived additional income in the same way as did the princes. Princesses of *cāu fā* rank were seldom allowed to marry a prince of a rank lower than their own. If they married at all it was to a prince of equal rank, or to the king, in which case they were usually made queens; but queens of this exalted rank had too much influence and had to be treated with too much deference to be very welcome to many kings. "There were, however, apart from any possible relics of a former matriarchal system, two strong reasons that caused kings to marry their half-sisters or even full sisters. One was religious, in accordance with the Buddhist tradition that kings, following the example of the Śākyas, must keep the royal line pure. Secondly, a more practical reason was that the king might as well marry them, since in any case they had to be confined to the inner palace, as to have allowed them the chance of marrying anyone else would have been to invite danger to the throne. Nevertheless it was more usual for princesses of lower rank to be selected as queens. Normally there were four at any one time, a greater



and lesser of the right and a greater and lesser of the left, the former side being the more honourable; but some kings never saw fit to raise any of their wives to the queenship. The harem included a large number of concubines who received varying degrees of *śākti nā* grade, but always less than that of *hmòm cẩu*.

2. The Officials.

During the Sukhodaya and the earlier part of the Ayudhyā periods, the administration of the kingdom was primarily carried out directly by the king and a number of feudal nobles. We know little about the latter beyond the fact that their rule was patriarchal in nature, as is plainly manifested by the earlier inscriptions and by philological evidence; and it will be more convenient to consider their functions in the light of this evidence in the course of later chapters. In the present section we shall confine ourselves to a consideration of the much better known official class of the fully developed Siamese administrative system. There is evidence indeed, from the mention of such general terms as *amātya* and *mantri* in the later Sukhodaya inscriptions,¹ that officials already existed at the king's court by about the middle of the fourteenth century A.D.; but it was not until the reorganization of the kingdom by King Paramatrailokanātha that the great metamorphosis of the feudal nobles into government officials took place. Quite apart from this reorganization of the administrative system, the change that took place in the nature of the kingship about that time was inimical to the existence of a hereditary nobility. But their heritage from the earlier feudal nobles, the survival of feudalism in a modified form (as will be

¹ e.g. Cordès, i, p. 94.



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explained in the next section), combined with a natural love of display, led the higher officials to aggregate to themselves wherever possible a high degree of that pomp and circumstance more usually associated with nobility. This they were the more easily able to do since no hereditary nobles survived, and the king found it economical to reward his servants with insignia and other visible tokens of rank. The officials thus preserved much of the outward appearance of a noble class—with the great difference that with loss of office they lost all. It is also remarkable that the terms *khun nān* and *phū tī*, which are used to designate the official class in general, have the appearance of being old Thai terms signifying a feudal nobility that have survived into a later period and only partially been displaced by more specific terms of Indian origin such as *senā*, *amātya*, and *mantrī*. Officials of whatever rank were very particular about the full recognition of their privileges and distinctions by those below them, and that the necessity for this was fully realized by the government, is shown for example by article 58 of the *Law of Offences against the Government*,¹ which specifically deals with the punishment of those who insult the dignitaries.

When in the reign of King Paramatrailokanātha the administration was reorganized and assumed its definitive form, the whole body of the population including the officials was divided into two divisions, one military and one civil; and the *Laws of the Civil, Military, and Provincial Hierarchies* of A.D. 1454 were promulgated by which the rank, duties, and privileges of every official were laid down and regulated. According to these laws each official was classified according to four methods of distinguishing *śākti*, literally meaning

¹ Bradley, ii, p. 206.



“power” and hence “dignity”. These four methods, which were closely correlated, were as follows:—

(1) *Śākti nā*, or dignity marks, which we have already seen were also allotted to members of the royal family, and which besides distinguishing rank had a deeper significance as will be shown in the next section. The *śākti nā* of officials ranged from 10,000 in the case of ministers in charge of the most important departments down to 400, at which the real official class appointed by the king may be said to have begun. Of *śākti nā* grade below 400 but above 25 were a host of petty functionaries who were not appointed directly by the king, but by the ministers or other high officials. These persons had few privileges and were marked for compulsory service like the commoners, and, also like them, served for part of their time in rotation, being set free during the remainder of the year to seek their own living by trade or agriculture. But they could be promoted to higher grades and thus become true officials, for there was no distinction of birth, and commoners could advance until they reached official status. Wives of officials who had been married with ceremonies, or were the gifts of the king, were regarded as having half the *śākti nā* grade of their husbands; lesser wives, half that of the principal wives; and slave wives, who had had children, half that of lesser wives.¹

(2) *Yāsa*, a series of honorific titles which, beginning with the highest, are given in the following list. Some of these titles are also known in an older form, here given in parentheses: *samtec cāu brahyā*, *cāu brahyā*, *brahyā* (*ōkñā*), *cāu hmū'n*, *brah* (*ōkbrah*), *camū'n*, *hlvañ* (*ōk hlvañ*), *khun* (*ōk khun*), *cā*, *hmū'n*, *bān*. The titles from *khun* downwards are probably of ancient Thai origin and in early times indicated personages of high

¹ Bradley, i, p. 198.

rank. Later the higher ranks were indicated by the title *hlvan*, probably of Khmer origin, and the Indian titles *brah* and *brahyā* to which were added in comparatively recent times *cāu brahyā* and *samtec cāu brahyā*. The Thai terms *cāu hmlū'n*, *camū'n*, and *cā* were applied exclusively to royal pages.

(3) *Rājadinnāma*, or "royal names", high-sounding terms of Sanskrit origin, such as *dharmādhipatī*, *bejrabijaiya*, *debabhākdī*, and *rāmateja*. In the case of the higher officials these "royal names", like the titles of princes, were often of very considerable length.

(4) *Tāmhñēn*, or terms indicating the grade of office held by the officials to whom they were applied, such as *senāpatī*, *palātdūlchalōn*, *cānvān*, *cāu-kram*, *palāt-kram*, and *samuhapāñjī*, in each case attached to the name of the particular administrative department.

All these four kinds of *śākti* were intimately correlated, and this correlation illustrates well the close relationship that existed in Siam between rank and office. Each official received all four kinds of *śākti*, though that the *śākti nā* was considered the most important we know from the fact that, although two officials in charge of *kram*s of a different degree of importance might have the same *yaśa* titles, the *śākti nā* grade of the official in charge of the more important *kram* would be higher than that of the other official. A very few examples will suffice to show the nature of the correlation between the different kinds of *śākti*. We may first take the case of an official who has received the *rājadinnāma*, *cākri* (etc.). He must have the *yaśa*, *cāu brahyā* and the *tāmhñēn*, *argamahāsenāpatīkrammahātdaiya*, i.e. head of the civil division, with the *śākti nā* grade 10,000. Again, the more humble functionary who occupied the office (*tāmhñēn*) of *cāu-kram chān* (overseer of the king's granaries) must have the *śākti nā* grade



1,400, the *yaśa*, *hlvañ* and the *rājadinnāma*, *bibidhasālī*. The same method applied also to the provincial officials. Thus the individual appointed to the *tāmhnēñ* of governor of the first-class province of Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja had the *śakti nā* 10,000, the *yaśa*, *cau brahyā*, and the *rājadinnāma*, *śrīdharmarājajātitejo* (etc.); while the official with the *tāmhnēñ* of governor of the third-class province Bicitra had the *śakti nā* grade 5,000, the *yaśa*, *brahyā* and the *rājadinnāma*, *dēbādhipatī* (etc.). The officials of every department, from the highest to the lowest, were graded in this way, and a full list of all the offices and titles under the central administration, as well as the more important ones under the provincial administration, are carefully set out in the hierarchy laws above mentioned. A document setting forth this kind of information, a kind of "Who's Who" in fact, was known as a *dāṁniap*; and besides these hierarchy laws there were other *dāṁniap* dealing in greater detail with particular provinces, or with the various ranks of the Buddhist Order. Some of these documents, dating at least from the end of the eighteenth century, have survived to the present time. According to La Loubère¹ it would appear that a single functionary sometimes held at the same time two offices with their accompanying titles.

A logical consequence of the correlation between rank and office was that if a person retired from the royal service, he not only gave up his office (and with it his means of making a living) but also lost his rank and titles, unless the king allowed him to keep them as a reward for his services. However, with regard to the *śakti nā* grade, it would appear from the *Law of the Military Hierarchy*,² that, if he still had a number of freemen dependent on him, as will be described in

¹ L. L., p. 80.

² Bradley, i, pp. 197, 198. °



the next section, he retained half his *śākti nā* grade; while even if he had no such dependents he still retained one-third of his *śākti nā* grade as some distinction from the commoners. But it is easily understood that an official preferred to remain in office all his life, and indeed he normally did so. In his old age his tenure of office often became merely titular, an official of lower rank actually carrying out all the duties attaching to the office but not being allowed to succeed to the corresponding titles during the lifetime of his chief. This practice was facilitated by the fact that no official was known by his personal name, which he dropped immediately he was appointed to any office, but was known only by the titles connected with that office. Thus it was that officials could be referred to only by the titles attaching to their offices, and so the personalities of individuals were soon forgotten when their places had been filled by others. A result of this was that distinguished though nameless officials were seldom long remembered to serve as a model and inspiration to those who followed, and indeed this apparent advantage seems to have been exactly what the system was designed to avoid, for absolute monarchy could hardly tolerate the existence of popular idols among the officials. In fact too great popularity, or the too striking success in war on the part of a general, was a fruitful cause of official downfall; and a throng of less successful functionaries was ever eager to intrigue and arouse the king's suspicions of one whose power threatened to become dangerous. Perhaps, indeed, it was this necessity of keeping the nobles within bounds that led to the periodical arrest of one official or another on some real or pretended charge of oppressing the people, the offender being condemned to flogging or a short term of imprisonment as a reminder that he was but a slave of the king,



yet only to be reinstated soon afterwards with as much or more dignity than before, and with no stigma whatever attaching to him on account of his temporary degradation. La Loubère¹ mentions that the Minister of Foreign Affairs (*Brah Glān*) was severely bastinadoed on account of some intrigue, but though the king refused to see him he did not remove him from office, and continued to make use of his services during the six months that he survived his punishment. The same writer further remarks that in general "the most infamous Punishment is reproachful only as long as it lasts. He that suffers it to-day, will re-enter to-morrow, if the Prince thinks fit, into the most important Offices".²

As already indicated, there was no distinction of birth between the official and the ordinary freeman. Nor were there any colleges where special instruction might be obtained, and the only schools were those attached to the Buddhist monasteries where the most elementary education was dispensed freely to all. In practice, however, children born in the families of officials were naturally given more opportunity of learning the art of government and fitting themselves to receive official appointments than those born in families devoted to agriculture, and thus fully occupied with seeking the necessities of life. Moreover, the families of officials had more leisure to learn, since, like the officials themselves, they were absolved from the necessity of rendering the personal service to the king which demanded so much of the time of the commoners. They were also used to expecting and receiving respect on account of their parents' position, and, though as yet without rank, were often addressed as *khun*, used as a purely courtesy title. In the provinces there was the special *tāmhnēn* of *phū jvay rājakāra*, or general assistant to

¹ L. L., p. 74.

² L. L., p. 105.



the governor, the duties connected with which office were not definitely delimited and the holder of which was directly responsible to the governor. The office was usually occupied by a son of the governor, who was thus trained to occupy a high position later.¹ In this way offices were frequently held by the same family for several generations but might be confiscated by the king at any time with or without reason, and without recompense to the family.² The chief training ground of young scions of the more prominent official families was, however, the *Mahātlek*, or corps of royal pages who served in the palace as the king's personal servants.³ As such, they corresponded to the personal followers of the princes, also termed *mahātlek*. While still children they were presented by their fathers to be employed in small matters near the person of the king. They then had the opportunity of listening to conversations and observing the way in which officials addressed the king on matters concerned with the administration; and they were also instructed in the *rājāśāpda* so that they might learn to address the king in the appropriate terms. They were advanced in dignity by small degrees but this depended in no way on the rank of their fathers. They were accepted, it is true, into the royal pages' department by reason of the honour in which their fathers were held; but no one could foretell how they would develop, and so some were advanced and eventually appointed to high positions within the palace or elsewhere, according to their merit. Others, being found unworthy of trust, were not raised in dignity to uphold their fathers' families. Such at least was the theory, though the factor of favouritism cannot of course be

¹ Prince Damrong (2), p. 199.

² L. L., p. 81.

³ The following details as to the training and position of the royal pages are derived mainly from Rāma V (2).



excluded. The *yasa* titles *cău hmũ'n*, *camũ'n*, and *că* were, as already mentioned, used exclusively to designate the different ranks of royal pages, and, though the *că* when first appointed received only a *śakti nā* grade of 200 or 300, yet he was regarded as a true official while persons outside this department were so regarded only after attaining the *śakti nā* grade of 400. Indeed the royal pages of whatever rank were more highly respected than officials of other departments of corresponding or even higher ranks, because they were the sons of good families, were appointed personally by the king, and, being in close attendance upon him, received his direct commands and had opportunities of addressing him, which were considered privileges of the highest order. In the same way officials of whatever rank resident in the capital and having access to the palace enclosure, where many of the offices of the central administration were situated, were known as "inner" officials and were regarded as much higher in dignity than provincial officers of apparently equal rank who were known as "outer".¹

At all times the officials were dependent for their living on the people committed to their charge, not on any direct rewards or salary from the king. They obtained a portion of the personal services and of the fruits of the agricultural labours of the people who lived under their control, a share of the taxes they collected if that happened to be their duty, of the fines that they imposed if they were judges, or of the cost of issuing legal documents and affixing seals. All these sources of official income and their influence on the working of the administrative system will be discussed in later chapters, but for the moment it is sufficient to note that the officials mainly depended for their living on what they

¹ L. L., pp. 85 and 96.



could make in the course of the execution of their duties, and also by presents from inferiors. Only in the latter half of the Ayudhyā period was the custom of distributing *pīa hvāt* to officials of over 400 *sākti nā* grade introduced. The *pīa hvāt* was a small monetary present from the king, which varied in amount according to the rank of the recipient. It was distributed only once a year in the month of November, and was in no way comparable to a fixed and regular salary, which is quite a modern innovation in Siam. According to Pallegoix,¹ in the fourth reign of the present dynasty great princes and ministers received each 1,600 ticals; officials of the rank of *brahṃyā*, 960 to 160 ticals; *brah* and *hlvan*, 60 to 20 ticals; and lower officials, 40 to 16 ticals. It is on record that, during several years in the second reign, the revenue had fallen so low that the *pīa hvāt* of the officials had to be decreased by a half or a third, or goods such as coloured cloth were distributed from the royal storehouses instead of money. But no objection could legitimately be raised by the officials since *pīa hvāt* was not a salary which they might regard as their due, but merely royal bounty with which the king might choose to reward services and which might be raised or lowered in accordance with the royal will.² In addition to the *pīa hvāt*, officials of high rank also received from the king such insignia of rank as gold and silver betel boxes, weapons, and state barges, and also such considerable presents as elephants, horses, buffaloes, slaves, and lands, all of which returned to the king with the office.³

Apart from sources of income, the privileges of officials of *sākti nā* grade 400 or more included freedom from

¹ *Description du Royaume Thai ou Siam*, pp. 294, 295. See also p. 236 below.

² Prince Damrong (4), pp. (8) and (9).

³ L. L., p. 81.



being marked and called up for forced labour, both for themselves and their families, though in the course of their duties they were often required to direct this work ; the right to retain their offices until the end of their lives ; the right to be represented by a substitute in legal cases in which they were defendants ; and the right of audience with the king. The amount of compensation due to them in case of assault by a person of inferior status was also increased in accordance with their *sākti nā* grade, although there was the disadvantage that if they assaulted anyone of inferior grade they were fined in accordance with their own *sākti nā* grade, not that of the person they assaulted. If of high rank they surrounded themselves with considerable pomp, and, whatever their position, whether high or low, they contrived to exact the greatest possible degree of fear and slavish obedience from those beneath them. In the presence of superiors, however, and especially of the king, they prostrated themselves with the most abject humility, though their submissiveness was in the main due, not to any true spirit of loyalty or affection, but to fear of punishment and the dire penalties threatened in this world and the next by the terrifying oath which accompanied the biannual ceremony of drinking the water of allegiance. To what extent and in what manner these officials enabled the complicated administrative machinery to function will appear in the course of this work.

3. *The Freemen.*

In order to understand the organization of the masses of the people we shall have to endeavour to reconstruct here the characteristics of society in the early feudal period, and we shall also have to anticipate in some measure the more detailed consideration that will



be given in later chapters to the evolution of the administrative system. In this attempt to reconstruct the early social conditions of the Thai, since the direct information provided by ancient inscriptions and linguistic allusions is scanty, we have in part to rely on the analogy of the development of other societies whose beginnings are better known, and in part to work backwards from later ascertained facts.

When the Thai were advancing southwards from Yunnan and were engaged in almost continuous warfare, their organization was naturally determined by military requirements and there is philological evidence that this organization was also based on kinship. The purely Thai expression *lūk hmū* meaning "a member of one's father's band" has come down to us from very early times when every freeman served with the other able-bodied men of his clan in a military band (*hmū*) under the leadership of a *cǎu hmū*. As settlements were established, the organization based on family relationship was modified by the new factor of local contiguity. Constant watchfulness still had to be maintained and so the form of this organization remained military, the chief being both headman of the village (*nāy pǎn*) and military leader (*nāy kòn dahār*), who owed feudal allegiance to the *cǎu mo'an*, or "lord of the country". Several such *mo'an* constituted a feudal state governed by a king, having the title *cǎu phèn tìn*, literally "lord of the land".

During the Sukhodaya period and the first century of the Ayudhyā period, though there is little information available on the matter, the people seem to have continued to be organized on military lines, the soldiers performing both military and civil duties in a kingdom the government of which as yet knew little of the theory of the division of labour. The administration was feudal



and of a type of which, as the terms *cầu mớ'ani* and *cầu phèn tin* indicate, territoriality was the basis; and it served a valuable purpose during a period when the population was small and the king's personal governing power hardly extended beyond his capital; the neighbouring territories being governed by his sons, the *cầu fã* princes, who were often succeeded by their own sons. These *cầu fã* princes held their lands as fiefs from the king and themselves lived on them, governing them paternally almost as independent states, and apportioning out their lands to a semi-hereditary nobility. Thus the prince did not himself directly control all the men who lived on his territory, but vassal nobles of various ranks were responsible to him for the men who lived on their lands and so on in echelons downwards. The princes were known as *khun* and the feudal nobles had what afterwards became the lower *yasa* titles of *hnhũ'n* and *băn*, which were then military titles dating back to the time when the Thai were continually on the war path, and meaning literally commanders of ten thousand, and of one thousand respectively.

Only the freemen, who formed the base of the feudal pyramid, actually cultivated the land, each man being allowed only as much as he and his family could cultivate, at most 25 *rài* (1 *rài* = $\frac{2}{3}$ acre). In return for being allowed to make their living from cultivating the land that they occupied, they were obliged to deliver a portion of their produce to their lord, some of which he retained for himself, and some of which he himself was obliged to deliver up to his superior lord or to the *cầu fã* prince. The freemen were also obliged to give a part of their time for personal service to those from whom they held their land, and hence to the king at the top, each noble being responsible for producing a certain number of men whenever a levy was required for public works or warfare.



The freemen also received protection from their lords and from the *câu fã* princes who, in imitation of the king, carried out within their limited spheres of jurisdiction a parental and undifferentiated form of administration. The group of freemen depending on a prince or great noble, that is to say his band of retainers, was designated by the Thai word *kôn*.

By the reign of King Paramatrailokanātha the king's power had become sufficiently strong within the territories adjoining the capital province for him to take steps to bring them under his direct control. For this it was necessary to limit or suppress the power of the feudal princes and nobles and thereafter reorganize the administration. Leclère has suggested ¹ that in early times in Cambodia, and the same theory would seem to be applicable to fifteenth-century Siam, the nature of the feudal system was changed from one of which the basis was territorial, and hence resembled the Frankish *seniorat*, to one of which the basis was personal, like the Roman *patrocinium*, according to which the vassal was allowed to choose his lord. By allowing the freeman or client (*br'ai fã*, or simply *br'ai*) to choose his lord or patron (*mũl nãy*, or simply *nãy*), the power of the latter was weakened because, instead of drawing his men from one well-defined area of land which was his fief, they were, within the limits of the territories immediately surrounding the capital, widely scattered and were also permitted to change their habitat. Further, with the change to the *patrocinium*, the land factor, which had formerly served to consolidate the power of the lord, lost its importance from his point of view, and it was convenient to consider the ownership of the land as vested in the freemen who actually cultivated it, though in theory all land belonged to the king and hence

¹ Leclère (1), pp. 121-7; and (2), pp. 15-27.



they held it directly from him. They still had the right to demand as much land as they and their families could cultivate, up to 25 *rai* each as previously, the only real difference being that they held this land directly from the king and in return rendered to him their personal services and a portion of their produce. A fuller consideration of the subject of land tenure and its administration will be found in Chapter V. So far as the change to the *patrocinium* affected the condition of the princes and nobles it seems probable that, while it undermined their power, it made little difference to their wealth since they received presents from, and were also allowed to retain a proportion of the services of, the clients, now attached to them on a personal basis. Thus they were enabled to cultivate the considerable private demesnes which as time went on they were able to acquire by purchase or by the gift of the king.

The change in the basis of the feudal system from a territorial to a personal one was necessarily accompanied by a change in the system of administration, since the governing power of the *cău fâ* princes had been undermined and it was necessary to replace it by the power of the central government. At the same time the task of administering the extensive tract of territory now under the direct sway of the king had outgrown the old parental undifferentiated methods (though the king continued to supervise the whole), and it was necessary to set up a system which would give scope for the development of the theory of the division of labour.

King Paramātrailokanātha was able to attain this end firstly, by dividing the population into two divisions, one military and one civil, and secondly, by establishing a number of government departments¹ the details

¹ *AA.*, vol. i, p. 10.



concerning the officials of which are set forth in the hierarchy laws promulgated in his reign. And it was the administrative system then constituted that was followed in broad principle until the reign of King Rāma V. The *câu fã* princes were sent to govern territory beyond that which had now come under the direct control of the capital, and they governed these outer provinces as almost independent states, even increasing the power that they had formerly enjoyed when they ruled the inner provinces. They were able to increase their power in this manner by reason of their greater distance from the capital and also because, in imitation of the new system evolved at the capital, they too set up functionally differentiated administrations; but naturally they were careful to see that freemen residing in their provinces were obliged to choose patrons residing in the same province. Those princes and high nobles whom it was not possible to appoint to the government of provinces, and who had previously lived on their own fiefs, were called to live in the capital and became heads of the newly formed government departments. As head of a department of the central administration, the prince (who had now attained *kram* office) or the great noble (who had now been metamorphosed into an official) was responsible, not for the whole of the administration in any particular region within the control of the central power, but for some special branch of the administration, such as land revenue and tenure, criminal justice and police, or military enlistment; but, as we shall see later, the differentiation was never perfect, and in later times it became confused through a tendency to slip back to a regional basis. The lesser nobles who had originally assisted in the administration of their overlord's fief now became officials, who were given posts in the particular



government department of which he was now the head, some of them being stationed in the capital while others were appointed to carry out the work of the department in the territory ruled from the capital.

The new government department had developed from the older body of vassals who cultivated the land of a feudal lord and owed him personal service; but the word *kram*, probably the Khmer equivalent of the Thai *kòn*, came to supplant the latter with the new meaning "government department". In consequence of the change, the freemen, whose patrons were attached to any particular government department and were probably officials thereof, when called up for personal service served in connection with that department. Princes and princesses not yet appointed to *kram* rank had nevertheless each their own *krams* of personal retainers, or *mahātlek*, corresponding to the king's *Mahātlek*, or royal pages; and these, being under such powerful patronage, were exempted from government service. When, however, a prince or other member of the royal family attained *kram* office, his wealth and position were very much increased because, in addition to his personal followers whose services he retained, he had a portion of the services and produce of a large number of other freemen.

As already stated, the hierarchy laws promulgated by King Paramātrailokanātha set forth in detail both the names of the various *krams* and the titles of the officials attached to them, accompanied in each case by their *śākti nā* grade. The time is now ripe for us to explain the origin of *śākti nā*, which literally means "power" (*śākti*) of "fields" (*nā*); and the survival of the use of which in these laws is one of the strongest pieces of evidence for the basis of the Siamese feudal system having originally been territorial. Under this type



of feudalism the *śākti nā* evidently expressed the area of land in *rai* which a vassal held from his lord, and this in the case of an ordinary freeman was not more than 25 *rai*; while a lord with a *śākti nā* of 5,000 *rai* had that area of land with its conjoined serfs under his control. With the change of the feudal system to a basis of personal attachment, although the patron no longer had authority over any lands beyond the comparatively small private demesne that he might happen to own, the *śākti nā* method of gradation was retained and systematized. This enabled one to tell the number of clients attached to a patron and which he was expected to be able to produce for government service. Thus, supposing each of his clients owned 25 *rai*, a patron of *śākti nā* grade 400 controlled 16 men; while a minister of 10,000 *śākti nā* grade controlled 400 clients. In actual practice, however, men tended to select patrons whose powers were such as to enable them to give their clients a greater degree of protection, or the work of whose *krams* was lighter; and it was necessary from time to time to combat this tendency by legislation, even to the extent of partially rescinding the client's right to choose his patron. Even at the time of their promulgation, one can see from the hierarchy laws that *śākti nā* was not only the measure of the number of a patron's clients (for indeed he might not have his full number) but was already used also as a gauge of the holder's dignity. Later it came to have other uses, such as in the computation of weregild, in reckoning judicial privileges, and so on. When a prince was appointed to the charge of a *kram*, his *śākti nā* grade was, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, very greatly raised. The explanation of this now becomes clear: it expressed not only a great increase in dignity but also in the number of men under his control.



After the changes introduced in the middle of the fifteenth century the relationship between patron and client continued to retain many of its old feudal characteristics, although the administration of the people was now carried out by officials having specialized functions. Of course the position was often complicated by the fact that most patrons were also officials, and hence their duty to the central government might at times conflict with the traditional one of protecting their clients. Generally speaking, however, in return for a specified portion of the clients' personal services, the patron was still obliged to defend his clients in justice and help them in other ways, such as by lending them money when in debt. Indeed, the latter was not only an obligation but a right, for, if they were unable to discharge their debts, they necessarily fell into slavery and it was natural that the patron should be given the first opportunity of enslaving those of his clients who would in any case be unable to avoid drifting into that state.¹ On the other hand a patron who shielded his client from arrest by an official acting on behalf of the king was severely punished.²

The patron was responsible for producing to his superior patron, and ultimately to the king, his proper quota of men when they were called upon for service in connection with their particular *kram*. If he was a noble of high rank the work of calling up the men devolved upon his superior clients (who were themselves patrons) and who were also *kram* officials whose duty it was to control the main mass of clients attached to the *kram*. These officials were the *čau-kram*, or chief, the *palāt-kram*, his deputy, and the *samuhapāñjī* or

¹ L. L., p. 78.

² Art. 39 of the *Law of Offences against the Government*, Bradley, ii, p. 200.



registrar, who also retained, in addition to these new *tāmhnēn*, the old *yasa* titles of *khun*, *hmū'n*, etc., until the Khmer or Indian forms *hlvai*, *brah*, and *brahyā* were introduced, after which the old Thai *yasa* titles were used only to distinguish the lower ranks of *kram* officials. It was the duty of these officials to go amongst the clients and round them up for service when required. The supervision of this work was carried out by a special government registrar's department which, in conjunction with the *samuhapāñjī* attached to each *kram*, kept a strict record of the members of each family, particularly with reference to the number of able-bodied men available for service; and they saw that the patrons produced the proper number of men when required. The details of the manner in which this department performed its work of marking the people in accordance with their fitness for service to the government, and the way in which they kept the rolls, will be dealt with in the next chapter.

It has been mentioned that the whole population was divided by King Paramatrailokanātha into two divisions, the civil and the military, each consisting of a number of departments (*kram*). The men belonging to the military division did only military work, while in peace time those belonging to the civil division were required to do only civil work, especially in connection with public works; but in time of war men of both divisions were obliged to fight. Again, all the clients were required to help in bringing criminals to justice and so did work which in non-feudal states is performed by the police. A client could only receive permission to choose a patron within his own division, civil or military. If he belonged to a family of skilled craftsmen, dancers or musicians, his choice was limited to the officials who acted as patrons of these bodies, which were all



attached to the king's palace. Thus craftsmanship tended to become hereditary. No client could be without a patron for, if he were, he would be without protection, and would either be placed under his father's patron or, in default of that, would be forced to join the *dāṣa hlvan*, or royal slaves, a deeply despised body of men the labour required of whom, however, was light, while their condition was made easy by the fact that they were maintained by the government. Normally the clients followed the ancient custom of serving under their parents' patron. When the parents belonged to different *krams*, or had different patrons in the same *kram*, their children, on reaching the age at which government service was required of them, were divided between the patrons of their parents, some of the children following one patron and some the other, according to minute regulations which are the subject of the *Law of Distribution of the People*.¹ They probably only sought to change their patrons when they were being oppressed, but the right they had of doing so, though frequently curtailed by administrative exigencies, may have served in some measure to protect them from oppression.

When young men reached the age of 18 they were obliged by their patrons, or by their father if he had attained the rank of *hmū'n* or *bān*, to enter the category of *br'ai sam* (recruits), in which they remained for two years. During this time their patrons were required to instruct them in the type of work which would be required of them, whether civil or military; and they could also make use of them as servants or as labourers on their own estates during a great part of the year. The fact that in later times the young men often continued to remain in the condition of *br'ai sam*, in the

¹ Bradley, ii, pp. 1 sqq.



service of their patrons, during the whole of the life of the latter, seems obviously to be an abuse of the original custom. Normally, however, when their period of training was over they became *brai hlvan*, or king's men, whose duty it was to do personal service in the royal corvées or in the military units, the patron being allowed to retain for himself their services during only a small part of their time each year. Article 25 of the *Law of Offences against the Government*¹ regulates the punishment of *nāy* who retain the services of a *brai hlvan* for more than one, two, or three days in the year. The *brai hlvan* remained in that condition until they reached the age of 60 years, when they were released from further service. They were also released before they attained that age if they had three sons in the royal service.

In the reign of King Nārāyaṇa, according to La Loubère,² the *brai hlvan* had to perform six months' service every year, but this was reduced in the Dhana-purī period to four months and afterwards was three months only. They did not have to perform all this service at once for if this had been the case they would not have had sufficient time to devote to cultivating their own lands. They were called up in rotation to serve part of their time according to the requirements and convenience of the government departments. When serving, their food was not supplied by the government but was brought to them by their wives.³ According to Bastian⁴ some of the soldiers (probably semi-professional units such as the palace guards) and some of the craftsmen such as the carpenters, served about half their time and lived near the palace; while craftsmen who showed any high degree of skill were made to serve

¹ Bradley, ii, p. 194.

² L. L., p. 54.

³ L. L., p. 53.

⁴ Bastian, p. 172.



the whole of their time with small wages and were set as heads (*nāy hmvat*) and instructors over their companies, but they still had to submit to marking as they were not regarded as true officials.¹ Besides these special cases, the ordinary *brāi* were often obliged to submit to irregular and extra demands on their services requiring their whole time without reward of any kind. For example, all the *brāi* of a particular locality might on a special occasion be called up in connection with clearing a road or digging a canal to facilitate the progress of the king or of high officials, or for some special work of building or fortification. On these occasions the *brāi* might not only have to give their own services but also those of their elephants, draught cattle, and horses.²

There was always a certain number of clients living in distant parts of the country where it was difficult to make use of their personal services and who were therefore released from these duties except in time of war. They were allowed instead to supply produce for government use. This was particularly the case in regions where certain products, such as saltpetre and tin, which were of special importance to the government, were to be obtained. The clients who were allowed to supply produce, which was collectively known as *svay*, instead of personal service, were designated *lekḥ svay*. About the middle of the Ayudhyā period there arose the custom by which the government agreed to accept money payment in lieu of personal service, since at that time there was greater need of money than of man-power. The amount of this payment, which was called *gā rājakāra*, differed at different periods (see Chapter IX). The new custom was largely taken advantage of by rich patrons who thus liberated many

¹ Ibid., p. 165.

² Dilock, p. 49.



of their clients and so enabled them to devote the time otherwise given to government service, to the cultivation of their patrons' lands. Skilled artisans, such as carpenters, also often preferred to pay *gā rājakāra*, because they could earn a considerable amount of money when released to work on their own. Both the *svay* and *gā rājakāra* were collected by the patrons, this arrangement lightening the work of the tax-gathering officials; while the patrons were allowed to retain a percentage of the money and produce they collected, just as by the older arrangement they were allowed to retain a proportion of the personal services of their clients. The introduction of the substitution of *gā rājakāra* for personal service undoubtedly did much to weaken the strength of the kingdom in time of war; and it largely undermined what remained of the institution of feudalism by turning it into a tax-collecting machine. But in any case feudalism in any form became an anachronism when a more enlightened central government was able and prepared to assume all the functions that should be proper to it, and the last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the abolition of the old system.

4. *The Monks.*

The Buddhist Order in Siam was represented from the time of Sukhodaya by a large but constantly changing body of monks scattered in monasteries throughout the country, and dependent for their maintenance on the charity of the people as a whole. The organization of the Buddhist Church in Siam and its relationship to the state will be fully considered in Chapter X, so that here it is necessary to do little more than emphasize the fact that the monastic institution was a less important political factor in Siam than was the case in Christian countries. The Order included a few princes and a



considerable number of retired officials, but in the main it consisted of freemen, slaves not being admitted. The freemen who formed the main body of the monks, although privileged to the extent of being excused from all taxation and service to the government while members of the Order, were, in the vast majority of cases, only temporarily removed from the power of their natural patrons and from the necessity of serving the state. For though it was usual for every male Siamese to take the yellow robe for some period in his life, often only a few months, it was rare for a man to follow the monastic calling throughout his life. Thus the Buddhist monks as a class remained in a fluid and unstable condition. The nature of the influence of their teachings on the government and people has already been referred to in the Introduction.

5. *The Brahmans.*

Since I devoted a chapter to the Siamese Court Brahmans in *Siamese State Ceremonies* a few words only on the subject will suffice here. From the period of Sukhodaya onwards, and especially after the capture of Añkor Thom in A.D. 1431, they settled in small numbers at the Siamese capitals, being recruited from time to time by fresh arrivals both from Cambodia and from small communities of Brahmans that had been located in the Peninsula since early times. Originating in Southern India, their ancestors had never been accompanied by any female Brahmans on their journey to Indo-China and hence they had intermarried with the people of the country, though they nevertheless retain in their features to this day the evidence of their Indian blood. In the ancient Khmer Empire they established a powerful caste having a strong influence on the secular government. The conditions on which



they came to the Siamese capital and their small numbers, however, effectively prevented their ever attempting to vie with the supremacy of the power of the monarchy in Siam, though they were held in high esteem right through the Ayudhyā period, and had great influence on the reorganization of the administration undertaken by King Paramatrailokanātha. Apparently they were organized in several *krams* under their own patrons, but, as their numbers were small and most of them received official positions, it would seem that the high *śākti nā* grade allotted to the chief Brahman officials must have served purely as a measure of their dignity unless, as is probable, they were given a large number of purely Thai clients. Some of the Court Brahmans were employed in officiating in connection with the royal ceremonies, for which they were fitted by their knowledge of Hindu ritual and their possession of more or less corrupt Sanskrit texts; while others, with whom we shall be more particularly concerned in the present work, were welcomed by the Siamese because they were versed in Indian and Khmer ideas on the art of government and were especially valuable on account of their ability to interpret the *dharma*.

6. *The Slaves.*¹

We now know definitely from the newly discovered Sukhodaya inscription of about A.D. 1344 that slavery existed in the Sukhodaya kingdom, though it may not have been so strongly established, or so highly elaborated, as it became after Ayudhyā had been founded. We know from the frequent mention of the institution in inscriptions and other contemporary documents that it continued to develop during the Ayudhyā period, deeply

¹ For many of the facts in this section my authority is Lingat (1).



penetrating the social life of the whole people and affecting all their customs. In the Bangkok period the condition of the slaves was much mollified, with the result that they continued to increase, and Pallegoix in the middle of the nineteenth century estimated their numbers as a quarter of the entire population. The abolition of slavery was begun by King Rāma V at the beginning of his reign and was completed about thirty years later.

The preamble of the *Law of Slavery*¹ distinguishes seven categories of slaves (*khā* or *dāṣa*), as with Manu, according to the manner in which they were acquired ; but, at any rate in the Bangkok period, they had practically become merged into two well-marked sections, the redeemable and the non-redeemable. The former were the debt slaves, who had sold themselves or been sold for a portion only of their full value, which was fixed according to their age and sex by the *Law of Compensation*,² and who could at any time regain their freedom by repaying to their masters the sum that the latter had given for them. On the other hand, the non-redeemable slaves were those that had been bought outright for their full value and over whom their masters had absolute power except to kill them, and could sell or bequeath them as they could their other goods and chattels. Their lot was not always so easy as that of the former group, since it depended entirely on the goodwill of their masters whom they had no means of changing as had the redeemable slaves, though public opinion acted to some extent as a check on oppression. Children whose mothers were redeemable debt slaves were free ; but those of mothers who were non-redeemable slaves were also slaves (*lūk dāṣa*, or birth slaves) though they could become free on payment of their value

¹ Bradley, i, pp. 330 sqq.

² Bradley, i, pp. 95 sqq.

according to the *Law of Compensation*. These private slaves can hardly be regarded as having formed a distinct class of the population. They had considerable rights, among which were the possession of and the right to inherit property, the right to found a family, and the right to sue in court through the medium of their masters. According to the hierarchy laws¹ they were given a *śākti nā* grade of 5, the same as that allotted to beggars and paupers who were still freemen.

During the Ayudhyā period the condition of the slaves of war differed so much from that of the private slaves that they alone may properly be regarded as having formed a class really distinct from the private slaves and freemen. They were all in the first place the property of the king, but some were distributed among the officials as a reward for the services of the latter. The main mass of them worked as *dāṣa hlvañ*, or royal slaves, on the royal demesnes, which they were compelled to cultivate throughout the year, the king providing for their maintenance. Others, known as *khā brah*, monastery slaves, were allotted to the cultivation of the monastic lands. The work was not heavy and their condition often compared favourably even with that of the debt slaves, who had to divide their time between working for the king and for their masters. But they were deeply despised, had no rights, and both they and their children were slaves in perpetuity unless on some special occasion the king exercised his clemency in deserving cases. In 1805, however, King Rāma I took pity on the slaves of war and gave them the right to buy their freedom, with the result that their lot soon became ameliorated and they were merged with the other slaves. Besides prisoners of war the *dāṣa hlvañ* and *khā brah* also included persons convicted of the

¹ Bradley, i, pp. 169 and 197.



most heinous offences, and often also their families and slaves, who were usually not redeemable. They were frequently employed in performing that most contemptible of tasks, cutting grass for the royal elephants.

So far as the private slaves are concerned, with whom we are chiefly concerned in the present work from the point of view of their relation to the administration, the division already mentioned into redeemable and non-redeemable slaves is of primary importance. The former remained liable to the royal service and originally they had to divide their time between the service of the king and that of their masters, giving six months to each; but as, during the time they were working for the king, they had to provide for their own subsistence, it was decided about the end of the Ayudhyā period¹ that they could work for their own profit one month in three, leaving the other two months to be divided between the service of the king and that of their masters. The masters could obtain the whole-time service of their slaves if they sent substitutes or paid *gā rājākāra* money. If the owner of a slave belonged to a different *kram* from that to which his slave belonged, it was often found convenient to transfer the slave, for reasons of administrative facility, to his master's *kram*; and, since the corvée work of some *krams* was much lighter than that of others, there was naturally an incentive for freemen to sell themselves as debt slaves to masters attached to *krams* where the work was light. If a man went further, and sold himself outright, he escaped from the corvées altogether,² for he entered the category of non-redeemable slaves who were bound to their masters entirely, though it appears that at certain periods a

¹ *Law of Distribution of the People*, Bradley, ii, p. 29, and *New (unclassified) Laws*, Bradley, ii, p. 412.

² *L. L.*, p. 77.



portion of the purchase money went to the king to compensate him for his loss of labour. Nor could freemen attached to the personal service of the king (*Mahātīlek*), or in the service of the monasteries, be seized by their creditors without the king's permission. It was to prevent the upsetting of the *corvée* strength of the various *krams* that the law gave the patron, before others, the privilege of lending money to his clients and, in case of their insolvency, making them his slaves. Only if he were not rich enough could his clients borrow money from, or sell themselves to, others. And even when that was the case the patron was obliged to inquire into the exact circumstances and satisfy himself that his client was really forced into slavery through dire poverty. Thus attempts were made to prevent collusion, but only by infringing the right of the freeman to sell himself as he chose, just as the original right of the freeman to exercise his free choice of a patron was in fact infringed by administrative necessities. Nevertheless the law was often evaded by reason of the impossibility of preventing the high officials and powerful princes from taking under their protection numbers of runaway clients whom they often purchased outright and made their slaves. The children of non-redeemable slaves, unless they were redeemed, belonged to the master of the mother; but here again the law intervened in an endeavour to maintain the proportionate *corvée* strength of the different *krams*. According to the *Law of Distribution of the People*¹ the first few children, differing in number according to the respective division (civil or military) of each of the parents, followed the mother's patron; but any further children of the mother were divided between the mother's patron and the father's patron.

¹ Arts. 10 and 11, Bradley, ii, p. 9.



We have seen that the slaves possessed extensive rights and in general it may be said that the condition of the slaves was often better than that of the freemen, more especially if they were non-redeemable and at the same time happened to belong to mild masters; for they were then completely released from the onerous royal *corvées* and had only to serve their masters who gave them protection and provided them with the necessities of life. Nor was there any shame attaching to the social status of a private slave. The joint result of the exactions of government officials and the inability of the central power to protect the poorer freemen, especially in the provinces, was their readiness to sell themselves to those who could protect them, even when they were not harassed by creditors. This led to a weakening of the *corvée* system which it was the constant endeavour of the government to counteract.

7. *The Foreigners.*

One of the greatest problems that confronted the various states of Further India from early times was that of obtaining adequate man-power to cultivate as much as possible of their extensive territories and, in case of war, to be drafted into the armies. Smallness of their own populations made it one of their first concerns to supplement these by captives carried off in war, and refugees from neighbouring countries where oppression at the time might happen to be more unbearable than that exercised within their own boundaries. It was the custom not only to make slaves of those actually captured in war, but also to transfer whole populations from conquered districts; and on these occasions no regard was paid to the sufferings of the persons thus transported. And apart from the spoils of regular



warfare, expeditions that were little more than slave raids were the regular occupation of the dry season. It must be said, however, that lack of any pride of nationality must have done much to soften the lot of these transplanted foreigners, once the ardours of the enforced journey and the discomfort of forming new settlements were accomplished. As La Loubère remarks : "Liberty is oftentimes more burdensom to them than Servitude. The Siameses which the King of Pegu has taken in war, will live peaceable in Pegu, at Twenty miles distant from the Frontiers of Siam, and they will there cultivate the Lands which the King of Pegu has given them, no remembrance of their Country making them to hate their new Servitude. And it is the same of the Peguins, which are in the Kingdom of Siam."¹

The foreigners thus removed to Siam *en masse* were mainly Laos, Khmers, and others whose countries were not separated by any impenetrable natural obstacles such as high mountains or dense jungles. The settlements of Mōns now found throughout Siam, the people still speaking their own language in addition to Siamese, and retaining their own particular form of Buddhism, have originated from the periodical streams of refugees that found their way into Siam since the sixteenth century whenever Burmese rule was particularly oppressive. These refugees seem always to have been welcomed by the Siamese rulers, who received them kindly and gave them lands to cultivate, only placing them under the obligation of performing the hated military service in the cohorts of foreign auxiliaries, on which, unfortunately, Siam came more and more to depend with the growing decadence that ushered in the close of the Ayudhyā period. They were indeed hardly regarded as foreigners and, in later times, some of them rose to

¹ L. L., p. 107.



positions of considerable importance in the administration, but mostly in connection with the military services.

It may here be remarked that the numerous hill tribes, speaking many distinct languages and usually animists, that inhabit parts of what is now Siam, had, during the period with which we are concerned, almost no place in the Siamese social system. The administration indeed seldom came in contact with them for they lived either in the inaccessible mountain ranges separating Siam from Burma, or else in the remoter hill regions of the North and of the Peninsula which still formed parts of the tributary states not ruled directly by the Siamese government.

The settlement in Siam of numbers of foreigners, apart from natives of neighbouring countries, and including Europeans, dates from the sixteenth century when Ayudhyā became a great emporium of trade. And besides legitimate merchants there were always a certain number of adventurers and persons seeking to escape justice at the hands of their own governments. In the reign of King Nārāyaṇa we are told by La Loubère¹ that there were Arabs, Portuguese born in the East, Chinese, and Malays to the number of about three or four thousand in each case. Besides these there were numbers of French, Dutch, and English. The French were in the ascendancy at that time but the Dutch and English continued to vie for supremacy chiefly in matters connected with trade, with the result that sometimes one and sometimes another secured the advantage as is well known and requires no further reference here. Many Japanese settled in the country in the reign of King Ekādaśaraṭha, but owing to their excesses they were mostly massacred in 1682, though it seems that they were later succeeded by others.

¹ L. L., p. 112.



One does not usually find on the part of the Siamese any strongly expressed dislike of intermarriage with foreigners and in fact considerable half-caste communities have long existed, by far the most numerous as well as the most useful being that which has resulted from Chinese immigration. The following remarkable edict, presumably dating from about the middle of the seventeenth century, is probably to be regarded, as is indeed indicated by the nature of the explanation appended, as a reflection of contemporary political forebodings, not by any means unfounded, rather than as an expression of any deep-rooted objection: "If any subjects of the king, Thai or Môn (here clearly not regarded as foreigners), male or female, regardless of the royal displeasure and of the laws, seeing the wealth and fortune of foreign merchants, shall give their daughters or granddaughters to be the wives of foreigners, English, Dutch, or Malay, who profess other religions, and allow them to be converted to foreign religions, those persons are to be considered as thorns in the side of the state and as rebels. They will be punished by confiscation of their property, life imprisonment, degradation, being sent to cut grass for the royal elephants, or by fines of various grades. The reason for this enactment is that the father will give rise to future offspring, and the father and son will bear news of the affairs of state to foreign countries, which, when they are possessed of this knowledge, will come and attack this kingdom on every side, and the Buddhist religion will decline and fall into dishonour."¹

Most of the foreigners from distant countries lived in the capital, and La Loubère² gives us some interesting information as to how they were governed and organized.

¹ *Law of Offences against the Government*, art. 13, Bradley, ii, p. 189.

² *L. L.*, p. 112.



He tells us that each nationality had its own quarter in the suburbs, and that each chose its chief, or *nāy*, from among its own people, who was responsible to an official whom the king nominated to look after the affairs of that people. But matters of the least importance had to be taken to the *Brah Glān*, or Minister of Foreign Affairs, for his consideration. We thus see that the Siamese applied their own methods of organization to the foreign communities resident among them. But though Siamese officials were appointed to govern the foreigners, who were also tried in special courts by Siamese judges, yet they always showed their spirit of toleration by allowing them to live according to their own customs, and by giving them perfect freedom in religious matters. Siamese history is unstained by records of religious persecution; and the apparent oppression of the Christians in the reign of King Bedarājā was in fact political in nature and was a reaction against the French encroachments of the previous reign. In this connection it is interesting to note that in the convention signed at Louvo on 10th December, 1685, French priests were given permission to preach and convert Siamese under the royal protection, provided only that they respected the government and laws of the country: the Christian seminary was to have the same favour as other religious institutions in the kingdom; the Siamese converts were to be released from government labour on Sundays and feast days; and, lastly, a just official was to be appointed to whom the delicate duty of judging, free of cost, the law cases of Christians, was to be confided.¹

With regard to the Chinese, though relations with China date back to the Sukhodaya period, we know from

¹ Lanier, *Étude historique sur les Relations de la France et du Royaume de Siam*, p. 67.



La Loubère that there were only about 3,000 Chinese in Ayudhyā at the close of the seventeenth century. In 1733 a Chinese rising took place when three hundred Chinese attacked the palace; but they were dispersed and forty of the ringleaders were executed.¹ This does not point to any great numbers being settled in Ayudhyā at that period. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, Chinese immigration had reached the rate of 15,000 annually; and, owing to their successful competition with the Siamese, especially in the city of Bangkok, this naturally led to the creation in modern times of a problem which has necessitated legislation with a view to government control of immigration. The Chinese, unlike the Europeans, were at all times regarded as owing personal service to the government; but as this service was never actually required of them, they were obliged to pay a special tax in lieu of it.

¹ Wood, p. 232.



CHAPTER IV

THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

The patriarchal nature of the administration in the early Sukhodaya period is clearly manifested in Rāma Gāmhēn's inscription where the king is referred to as *bà khun* or "father of the *khun*", the latter being the feudal rulers of the provinces, while the lesser nobles were known as *lūk khun* "children of the *khun*". Besides being their commander-in-chief in war the king was, as we shall see in later chapters, the legislator and chief judge of his people. But though a staunch supporter of the Buddhist religion his priestly functions were probably as yet but little developed. In all matters connected with the administration, both civil and military, the king was assisted by those *lūk khun* who were the chiefs of the great body of retainers which formed the population of his capital and the land immediately surrounding it. King Rāma Gāmhēn has left us a striking word picture of their deliberations in council: "On days other than those on which the (Buddhist) precepts are recited, King (*bà khun*) Rāma Gāmhēn, sovereign (*cāu moa'n*) of Śrī Sajjanālai and Sukhodai, seats himself on this stone slab, and, presiding over the assembly of nobles and dignitaries (*lūk cāu lūk khun*) discusses with them the affairs of state."¹ That these affairs were not only pressing matters concerned with defence and the preservation of internal law and order, there is ample evidence in the same inscription which speaks with pride of religious foundations, markets, plantations, irrigation works, and other amenities betokening a fairly advanced state of civilization.

¹ Cœdès, i, p. 47.



Indian and Khmer ideas of kingship and of government had no doubt been gradually absorbed during the latter part of the Sukhodaya period and the first hundred years after the foundation of Ayudhyā, but it was not until the reign of King Paramaṭrailokanātha that a definite reorganization of the administration was carried out. This was necessitated by the expansion of the king's direct authority over the provinces adjoining the small area of land surrounding the capital which alone had previously been directly responsible to the king; and it was made possible by the influx of captured Khmer officials and literati after the sack of Aṅkor Thom by King Paramarājā II in A.D. 1431. These skilled statesmen were able to assist the latter king's successor, King Paramaṭrailokanātha, in strengthening his power by changing the basis of the feudal system from a territorial to a personal one, which had long before been done by the Khmers in their own country; and also by evolving a centralized and functionally differentiated system of administration for the large area now placed under the direct control of the capital. King Paramaṭrailokanātha was only seventeen when he succeeded to the throne, and hence must have been very much in the hands of his Khmer advisers. His system must, therefore, have owed a great deal to their inspiration, but in course of time it underwent considerable modification in accordance with the necessity of adapting it to Siamese requirements. Many of the offices are of purely Thai origin and most of the well-known Khmer titles mentioned in ancient Khmer inscriptions are missing. Besides which we know that the Siamese have, from the days of King Rāma Gāmhēn down to the present time, been masters of the art of consciously assimilating from foreign sources what they thought suited to their needs, at the same time retaining and



combining with the new methods much that was their own.

Before beginning to deal with the fully developed Siamese administrative system in detail, it will be necessary to consider the part played by the king in this régime. It has been remarked in Chapter II that among the effects of Indian influence on the Thai were the deification of the king, his exaltation by greatly elaborated royal ceremonial, and his isolation and protection by taboos. These naturally fostered the growth of the master and servant relationship between the king and his people, though, as has been mentioned, this seems never to have entirely excluded the old Tai relationship which approximated rather to that of a father and his children. But the expansion of the realm, the changed conception of the kingship, and the fact that the king was obliged by administrative necessity to delegate part of his power, in practice if not in theory, to his officials, while fear rather than affection was too often the basis on which the security of the government rested, were bound to widen the gulf between the monarch and the masses of his subjects. Nevertheless he still heard important appeals; retained, with few exceptions, the right of inflicting the death penalty; and at least made a show of hearing the petitions of oppressed subjects. Over his ministers he maintained the most absolute authority, though their power was undoubtedly considerable and often enabled them to influence the succession after the death of a king. He paid the closest attention to the supervision of affairs of state and important decisions could be made by him alone.

In the *Palatine Law*, promulgated by King Paramatrilokanātha in A.D. 1458, the king's daily time-table is regulated on lines which, from their resemblance to



similar ones laid down by Kauṭīliya and Manu, suggest an Indian origin. This Siamese royal time-table is as follows: "At 7 a.m. he goes to the Glorious Throne and the palace ladies attend him; at 8 he partakes of food; at 9 he goes to the place for meeting the monks where the palace ladies offer them royal bounty, attended by lictors; at 10 he calls for food to eat, and goes to sleep; he remains inside until 1 p.m. when he goes for a walk. At 2 the royal ladies, old and young, enter the palace and attend upon him. At 3 the officials of 10,000 to 800 *śākṭi nā* grade confer with the king on matters of state. At 4 he goes for a walk. At 5 he goes to meet the monks. At 6 he goes to the inner palace to discuss internal affairs. At 7 he judges military matters, and at 8 he judges civil matters. At 9 he judges appeals. At 10 he calls for food. At 11 soothsayers (*horā*) and the royal pandits (*rājapāṇḍita*) discuss the law with him. At 12 music is played to him. At 1 a.m. they read history to him. At 2 or 3 he retires to sleep until 7 a.m." ¹

Siamese history naturally contains examples of kings who neglected their duties and gave themselves up to debauchery, with the inevitable result, in a country where strength in the ruler was the first essential, that they soon brought ruin on themselves. But even the more successful of Siamese monarchs no doubt somewhat varied this rigid time-table, more especially if they were fond of sport, like King Nārāyaṇa; and from the account which Gervaise ² has left us of the way in which this king spent his day, there is no doubt that he was as meticulous in his attention to affairs of state as could be desired. He used to meet his councillors both morning and evening, and generally reserved his decision on matters of consequence until the evening.

¹ Bradley, ii, p. 125.

² Gervaise, p. 117.



If he noticed that a councillor appeared to have some private reason for not saying what he really thought, the king sent for him secretly in order to discover his true feelings. La Loubère tells us that in coming to a decision the king always decided as he pleased and never felt obliged to ask or follow the advice of anyone.¹

It was always a difficult matter for a Siamese king to get a sincere expression of opinion from a minister. Replies had to be wrapped up in the most non-committal court language in order to avoid the possibility of offending the royal ears; and an official endeavoured to ascertain the sort of reply that the king would prefer to hear rather than the reply that the facts warranted. It was therefore necessary for the king, in order to be in close touch with the actual state of affairs, to supplement the direct information obtained from his ministers by a system of espionage which, if not as highly organized, was probably as widespread as that recommended by Kauṭīliya in Ancient India. Indeed La Loubère tells us that the trade of informer "is commanded to every person at Siam, under pain of death for the least things; and so whatever is known by two Witnesses, is almost infallibly related to the King; because that everyone hastens to give information thereof, for fear of being herein prevented by his Companion, and remain guilty of Silence".¹ The ease with which informers might reach the ear of the king with the most ill-founded complaint against a minister was a source of continual unrest; and to retain his position an official had to employ every artifice to render these complaints ineffective.² In the law texts numerous articles inveigh against the offence of *āmrān*, or being silent about things on which one should speak, while others deal with the opposite evils

¹ L. L., p. 103.

² L. L., p. 106.



of sending anonymous letters and otherwise giving rise to false reports.

The royal councils were two in number: firstly, the *lūk khun sālā*, a council of ministers and heads of the chief departments of state, presided over in the absence of the king by the head of the civil division¹; and, secondly, the *lūk khun sālā hvan*, a supreme court of Brahman judicial advisers. The former were mainly concerned with matters affecting the general administration, and, as a result of their deliberations, edicts were issued and dispatches sent out to the provinces; while the business of the latter was confined to more strictly legal matters and will be dealt with in Chapter VIII. The king usually presided in person over these councils at their meetings. On these occasions, the only excuse for the absence of a minister or high official was illness, in which case the king immediately sent a physician to inquire after the absent councillor, an action that partook of the nature of spying rather than of solicitude.² Apparently the councils sometimes deliberated in the absence of the king, but they could not pass any measure without the royal consent. In the Bangkok period, when princes were appointed to the actual, and not merely titular, control of important departments, there was added a third council, that of the princes.³ The first two ministers also held councils of their respective subordinate officials to discuss work connected with their various branches of the administration.⁴

The influence which the counsels of clever queens and favourite concubines undoubtedly possessed over some Siamese kings in relation to affairs of state may also be mentioned, though as a rule their interests were

¹ L. L., p. 89.

² Rāmā V (1), p. 60.

³ Van Vliet, *JSS.*, vol. vii (1910), pt. i, p. 62.

⁴ Prince Damrong (5), p. 46.



confined to the petty intrigues of the harem. It has also been suggested that concubines, being drawn as they were from many of the most important families of the kingdom, were a valuable adjunct to the king's system of espionage, since they could inform the king as to the loyalty or otherwise of their relatives. But there was the possibility that they might prefer to spy in the interests of their families.

On certain occasions of great ceremony the king gave audience to all the officials present in the capital, down to those of 400 *śākti nā* grade; and I have elsewhere¹ described the procedure in the case of such a State Audience at the reception of a foreign embassy, when the prostrate officials were arranged in strict order of precedence according to their *śākti nā* grade, the nearest approaching to within about twenty paces from the elevated window in the throne hall in which in the Ayudhyā period the throne was set. The civil officials were ranged on the left of the throne, and the military officials on the right, a central space being left for the approach of the foreign ambassadors. The discipline observed at such audiences was strict, death being the punishment ordained by the *Palatine Law* for whispering during a State Audience. It was regarded as a great honour for the king to address anyone during the audience.

Our primary sources for the study of the functionally differentiated administrative system instituted by King Paramaṭrailokanātha are the hierarchy laws of A.D. 1454 where the titles and offices of the various *krams* in both the civil (*balaro'an*) and military (*dahār*) divisions are recorded in detail. These laws as they have come down to us, however, bear the marks of many later modifications and revisions, and in particular they

¹ *Siamese State Ceremonies*, chap. xiv.



mention, in addition to the *krams* that were established at the time the law was promulgated, many that were added from time to time in later centuries as the system became further elaborated.

It is interesting to note that in the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy*, the royal family is placed at the head of the civil division, although the terms *kṣatriya* and *mahākṣatriya*, which signified the military caste in India, are not unknown in Siam as applied to her kings. Until comparatively recent times, as we have seen, members of the royal family did not take any definite part in the central administration, princes of *kram* rank being merely the titular heads of departments. This does not, however, apply to the *Vān Nā*, nor in a lesser degree to the *Vān Hlāñ*. The former, in particular, was usually of the greatest service to the state in sharing with the king the responsibilities of guiding the general course of the administration.

Following the royal family comes a list of personal servants of the king, which includes the pages, cooks, and keepers of the inner palace stores, collectively known as the *Kram Mahātlek*, the officers of which, as has been mentioned in the last chapter, were largely recruited from the sons of high officials. They received greater respect than their *sākti nā* grade warranted, owing to their privilege of approaching the king and the likelihood of their being appointed to high positions elsewhere. Attached to the *Mahātlek* were also the female servants and guards of the harem, the nurses of the royal children, and those characteristic accompaniments of Oriental courts, the dwarfs and albinos. The *Mahātlek* really represented the king's band of personal retainers of earlier feudal times; and they still remained attached to him, and were not regarded as forming a government department, although the functions and titles of the



formerly simple personal officers must have undergone considerable elaboration, as a result of the introduction or development of the harem, and the exaltation of the king's majesty. In the same way the queens, princes, and princesses had their *mahātlek*, personal attendants of gentle birth who performed light duties in their households. They were quite distinct from the *brāi sam*, or ordinary clients, which both members of the royal family and officials had in their service and might use for the performance of more exacting tasks. The *Vān Nā* and *Vān Hlān*, moreover, maintained great pomp and populous courts, similar to that of the king, in which apparently some of the departments of the central administration were duplicated, but no details of their constitution or functions seem to be available.

Following the *Mahātlek* in the *dāmniap*, mention is made of a remarkable office of which the *yaśa* and *rājadinnāma* are *Cāu Brahyā Mahāuparāja* (etc.), with a *śākti nā* grade of 10,000. This title was abolished so long ago that the nature of the duties attached to it are not known, and the *tāmhnēn* with which the title was connected is not stated in the law. The holder of this office is, however, mentioned by La Loubère¹ as being allowed to stand in the king's presence. He must be carefully distinguished from the *Brah Mahā Uparāja*, whom we have seen was a very exalted prince with the *śākti nā* grade of 100,000. But though he was certainly not of royal birth, this official, from his position in the *dāmniap*, and from the presence of the term *uparāja* in his style, may have enjoyed some princely privileges as a special mark of the royal favour.

It is important to note at this juncture that, apart from the evidence of the law texts as to the reorganization of the administrative system undertaken by King

¹ L. L., p. 95.

Paramatrailokanātha, there is the additional and independent statement in the *Annals of Ayudhyā* that this king "established the names, offices, and *śākti nā* grade of the dignitaries, making the head of the soldiers, *samuha brah kalāhom* ; making the head of the civilians *samuha nāyaka* ; making *khun mo'an*, *brah nagarapāla mo'an* ; making *khun vān*, *brah dharmādhikaraṇa* ; making *khun nā*, *brah kṣetrā* ; making *khun glān*, *brah koṣādhipatī*, all with *śākti nā* grade 10,000".¹ This passage records one of the king's first acts after ascending the throne in A.D. 1448. Thus it would seem that the appointment of the six ministers herein mentioned took place, together with the division of the people into civil and military divisions, six years before the *śākti nā* law was promulgated ; and that the intervening period was occupied with the development of the new system and the institution of several other *krams*. The fact that Thai titles are mentioned for neither the head of the civilians, nor the head of the soldiers, supports the evidence of the hierarchy laws that these divisions were established for the first time in this reign. On the other hand the mention of the Thai titles *khun mo'an*, *khun vān*, *khun nā*, and *khun glān* (ministers of the capital, palace, lands, and treasury respectively), suggests that these offices had existed before, in the early part of the Ayudhyā period or even during the time of Sukhodaya ; but their holders could then have been only personal officers of the king who were replaced in King Paramatrailokanātha's reign by men who had formerly been important feudal nobles.

¹ A.A., vol. i, p. 10. The preservation of this important passage in an obviously original and unedited state is very fortunate, considering the amount of periodical revision to which the *Annals* have been subjected. The traces of such revision are particularly evident in the use of comparatively late titles, even before King Paramatrailokanātha's reign, e.g. *cāu brahṇā mahāsenāpatī* in the reign of King Rāmarāja.



The added powers and responsibilities attached to these offices under the new administrative system would naturally have been marked by the conferment of high-sounding Indian titles. The *yāsa* title *khun*, the highest that existed up to that time, was superseded by *brah*; while in later times *brahyā* and *cāu brahyā* were introduced as the power and dignity of these offices were gradually enhanced.

In the perfectly developed Siamese administrative system the heads of the civil and military divisions, or divisions of the left and right, were known as *argamahāsenāpatī*; while the heads of the four great departments of the civil division were designated *senāpatī*, and were collectively known as the *cātustambha*, or four supports. The four *senāpatī* were no doubt at first under the control of one of the *argamahāsenāpatī*, the head of the civil division (who also had his own *kram* with officials for administrative purposes), since, though it is not mentioned in the passage quoted in the *Annals*, we know from the *Law of the Military Hierarchy*,¹ that there were four general officers, each originally in command of one of the four divisions (*cāturāṅga*) of the army, who were under the command of the *argamahāsenāpatī* of the military division. Strangely enough the word *senāpatī* (Sanskrit, *senāpati*, a general) is not used to denote these high officers of the military division for whom the Thai term *mè dāb* is preferred. When the Khmers² evolved a distinct civil administration, they naturally modelled it on an already existing military form, and King Paramatrailokanātha followed their model, at the same time retaining many

¹ Bradley, i, p. 172.

² The Khmer cabinet, as we know from the *galerie historique* of Ankor Vāt, consisted in the twelfth century of four chief ministers, presumably corresponding to the Siamese *cātustambha*; but their titles are purely Khmer and have no resemblance to anything Siamese.



of the military characteristics of the old Thai feudal system; and, since in time of war the civil division was called upon to fight, the *senāpatī* then became generals in fact as well as in name. Probably the Thai term *mè dāb* was retained for the generals of the military division as a distinction. The various *krams* of the military division, which formed a kind of professional army, will be dealt with in Chapter VI; here we shall confine ourselves to the consideration of the *krams* of the civil division though, for reasons that will be explained in due course, it will be necessary to consider at the same time the *krams* placed under the *immediate* control of both *argamahāsenāpatī*. The six ministers, it will be understood, were resident in the capital, and their authority was at first confined to the area within the *van rājadhānī*, or territory ruled directly from the capital. How their power gradually spread beyond this area will be described in the next chapter.

Besides the *krams* of the *argamahāsenāpatī* and of the *cātustambha*, the central administration also included other *krams*, within the civil division, of less, but still very great importance. These were known in later times as the *krams* of the six *mantri*, or councillors. On account of their importance, it seems probable that they were established at the time of the promulgation of the hierarchy laws in 1454 or soon after, it having been found necessary by that time further to elaborate the central administration.¹ But naturally these new *krams* had not the importance of the original ones, for the high officials in charge of which we shall reserve the use of the term "minister". The six *mantri* were the Chief of the Department of Church Administration,

¹ Prince Damrong expresses his opinion in his work, (3), p. 28, that the Registrars' Department was established in the reign of Rāmādhīpatī II.



the Chief of the Royal Apparel and Insignia, the Chief of the Registrars' Department, the Chief of the Palace Guards, the Chief of the *Glān Mahāsampātī* (one of the treasuries), and the Chief of the Royal Scribes. All these officials had *śākti nā* grade 5,000, except the Chief of the Ecclesiastical Department whose grade was 10,000. The six *mantri* were not responsible to the *cātustambha* but directly to the king. In addition, the civil division also comprised, with direct responsibility to the king, the important *krams* of the Court Brahmans, probably originally attached to the Palace Department (*Vān*), whose chiefs were of 10,000 *śākti nā* grade, and the Elephant Department, with chiefs of 5,000 grade. The latter department was transferred from the military division in the reign of King *Prāsāda Dōn*.

In addition to the major *krams* above mentioned there was a large number of minor ones of varying degrees of importance, the chiefs of which were directly dependent upon and under the commands of the chiefs of the major *krams*. No doubt they had no place in the original law of 1454, but were established from time to time as the central administration became more highly elaborated, and thus came to be added on to the original *dāminiap*. In dealing separately below with the functions of the various major *krams*, the more interesting and important of the minor *krams* dependent upon them will also be mentioned. Many of these dependent *krams* show dual organization, there being *krams* of the left and right, each having a slightly different function but both remaining closely related. In the present state of knowledge it would perhaps be unwise to attempt a definite explanation of this division into right and left, which is found in other institutions in many parts of the world. In Siam, we have, to mention only the most outstanding examples, the queens of the right



and left, the great administrative divisions of the right and left, and sometimes departments and offices of the right and left, while in the next chapter we shall see that provinces were also so distinguished. In the case of the departments, however, there is also sometimes a *kram* of the centre; and one is tempted to conclude that the division into right and left is here simply one of convenience, modelled on the natural one of right and left hand, which after all would seem to be the first and most primitive mode of division to suggest itself.

The essential officers of the *kram* were, as mentioned in the last chapter, the *cāu-kram*, or chief, the *palāt-kram*, his deputy, and the *samuhapāñjī* or registrar. Even the offices held by the ministers were the homologues of that essential office, the *cāu-kram*; but this homology was masked by their importance, which caused their holders to receive peculiarly high-sounding *rājadinnāma*, and surrounded them with almost princely pomp. Their *palāt-kram* had the superior *tāmhnèn*, *palātdūlchalòn*; and there was a large staff of other officials whose exact duties are not in every case precisely known. In some *krams*, though not in those of the six ministers, there was an additional *tāmhnèn*, that of *cānvān*, who was of higher rank than the *cāu-kram* of the same department. The *yaśa* titles of the various officials depended on the importance of the *kram* to which they were attached. In the present work it is not proposed to give the full *rājadinnāma* of the various officials to whom it will be necessary to refer, owing to their frequently being very long, and it will often be found most convenient to refer to officials simply by their *tāmhnèn*, or office, by which indeed they have always most commonly been known to Europeans. In some cases, as for example in the case of the six *mantri*,



we may use English equivalents without the danger of suggesting European models; but often it is more desirable to retain the Siamese term, particularly since, as we shall see later, the duties attached to offices varied from time to time.

There is another official of some importance attached to the larger *krams*, of whom a few words may be said here. This is the *samian trā*, or secretary, more literally "the seal secretary", whose duties were in connection with the writing and sealing of official documents. We know from the hierarchy laws and also from the second part of the *Brah̄ Dharmanūñ Law*,¹ of which the preamble dates from A.D. 1635, that the chiefs of the larger *krams* were entrusted by the king with official seals with which they sealed all administrative documents issued by them. The above-mentioned law also tells us the purposes for which each seal was to be used. The best known seals, at least in later times, were the lion, elephant, and crystal lotus seals of the *Mahātdaiya*, *Kalāhom*, and *Brah̄ Glāñ* respectively. Documents thus sealed and from that fact themselves known as *trā* (seal) were sent out to the provinces by the officials of the central administration. Since many of these documents, dating from the beginning of the Bangkok period or even earlier, have been preserved, we know a good deal more about the problems and details of the working of the provincial administration than we do about the affairs of the central administration, to the ministers controlling which the royal orders were probably usually delivered personally or by verbal messages. The importance that was attached to the seals themselves and to the sealed documents is known from many sources. Article 28 of the *Brah̄ Dharmanūñ Law*² warns officials against forged sealed documents,

¹ Bradley, i, pp. 40 sqq.

² Ibid., p. 58.



while articles 55 and 59 of the *Law of Offences against the Government*¹ provide for the punishment of those altering or adding to sealed documents. La Loubère remarks² that the king's authority was linked with his seal and Lanier³ mentions the importance attached to the possession of the royal seals in the revolution which took place at the close of King Nārāyaṇa's reign, it being generally considered that power and authority passed to those who held the seals.

We now come to the detailed consideration of the various *krams* of the civil division, and the various modifications in function that they underwent during the four hundred years following King Paramatrailokanātha's reign. The order with which we shall deal with them will be that in which they occur in the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy*, although no special significance can be deduced from that order. We must also consider here the important *kram* placed immediately under the control of the head of the military division, because this *kram* in later times came to have certain civil functions. Besides the hierarchy laws, our main sources of information on the structure of the central administration are the *Brah̄ Dharmanūñ Law* and King Rāma V's *Speech on the recent Changes in the Administration* which latter refers in the main to the condition of the old administrative system just before he abolished it, but also devotes some attention to its historical development. In the case of a few of the *krams* a little light is thrown on the functions of the officials by remarks in early European accounts.

1. *Kram Mahātdaiya*, of which the *argamahāsenāpati* had the title *Cāu Brahyā Cākri Sriṅgarakṣa Samuha nāyaka* (etc.); and 2. *Kram Kalāhom*, of which the

¹ Bradley, ii, pp. 205, 206.

² L. L., p. 107.

³ Op. cit., pp. 156, 158.



argamahāsenāpati had the title *Cāu Braḥyā Mahāsenāpati* (etc.). The former, of which the title *samuha nāyaka* means, literally, "lord of the multitude," was, as we have seen, originally head of the civil division established by King Paramaṭrailokanātha, and we know from La Loubère that by King Nārāyaṇa's reign he commanded the civil division *throughout the kingdom*; while in the same way the *Kalāhom* commanded the military division *throughout the kingdom*, and was generalissimo of all the armies. But what was the extent of this control? We know by analogy that the head of the civil division must originally have had the four *senāpati* under his direct control, just as the head of the military division directly commanded the four great generals. History tells us, however, that the relative importance of the *senāpati* very soon increased and they became directly responsible to the king for the work of their departments, while in the *dāṁniap* their *śākti nā* grade is stated to be 10,000, the same as that of the *argamahāsenāpati*, which probably was not the case originally. The *Mahātdaiya* thus became responsible merely for seeing that the lists of the clients in all the civil *krams* were maintained, and for co-ordinating the labour of the men when they were called up for government work, though the actual duty of marking the clients was transferred, probably in the reign of King Rāmādhīpati II, to a special Registrars' Department, as will shortly be described. At first, like those of the *senāpati*, the duties of the *Mahātdaiya* were probably limited to supervising the civilians of the territory directly under the control of the capital (*vaṇ rājadhānī*); but as the power of the central government spread outwards, and the various departments began to control the corresponding departments of the provincial administrations, he became responsible for the civilians,



as the *Kalāhom* was for the soldiers, throughout the country, just as we are told by La Loubère. Moreover, it appears that all the provincial governors were responsible to him, and that he was president of the council of ministers.¹

It was probably in King Bedarājā's reign, following the rebellion of Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja in A.D. 1691, that it was found desirable, in order to obtain a unified command of all the men available for service in that part of the country, to place those of both civil and military divisions in the southern provinces under the control of the *Kalāhom*; while in the same way the *Mahātdaiya* commanded men of both divisions in the northern provinces. In future, *dahār* and *balaro'an* were levied indiscriminately both for civil and military work throughout the kingdom, wherever the work was to be done, and the distinction between them disappeared except in name. This change was the more easily accomplished since men of neither division had special training for their work. But the change thus brought about did not stop there. Presumably the ability of the four *senāpatī* to extend their control over the corresponding departments of the provincial administrations had not been equal to that of the two *argamahāsenāpatī*, and the latter now had the advantage of commanding the country's man-power. The result was that not only the control over the freemen of the northern and southern provinces was divided between the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom* respectively, but the whole administrative system of the provinces including that of the *vañ rājadhānī* was similarly divided between them; and it was thus that they became known to Europeans as Ministers of the North and South respectively. They each controlled provincial

¹ L. L., p. 89.



administration, war, justice, and finance in the provinces under them; but these complicated changes in the functions of the two chief ministers, and the effect which they had on the whole trend of development of the administrative system in later times, will become more clearly comprehensible after our study of the provincial administration in the next chapter, where we shall see more of the work of these important *krams*. It was necessary, however, briefly to anticipate the discussion of the subject in the present section, and particularly to note the loss of the early functional differentiation of the administrative system as constituted by King Paramatrailokanātha. This was, however, in part compensated by a certain secondary growth of functional differentiation necessitated by the fact that, as King Rāma V remarks, these two great *krams* were in later days heavily overloaded with work. Thus, as the chief officers of the *Mahātdaiya* were mainly occupied with justice and other secondary matters, it was, probably in the eighteenth century, found necessary to create two subsidiary *krams* under two high officers, *Hlvaṇ Mahāāmmātyā* (*śākti nā*, 3,000) and *Hlvaṇ Cā Senāpatī* (*śākti nā*, 2,400), who were charged with the conscription of the freemen in the outer and inner *Mahātdaiya* provinces respectively. In the same way the *Kram Kalāhom* had two subsidiary departments, of which the one under the command of an official with the title *Brah̄ Dharmatrailoka* was responsible for the freemen in the outer *Kalāhom* provinces, while the one commanded by *Hlvaṇ Śrīsauvarājabhākdi* was concerned with the conscription of the freemen in the inner provinces under the *Kalāhom*.

A company of messengers was attached to the *Mahātdaiya*, the members of which had the important duty of carrying *grā* from headquarters to the provinces.



There were also several subsidiary *krams* of skilled artisans attached to the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom*, which included, in the case of the former, the sawyers, builders, leatherworkers, pyrotechnists, and musicians, whose services were no doubt required in connection with palace ceremonial.

3. *Kram Nagarapāla* (or *Mo'an*), of which the *senāpatī* had the title *Cāu Brahyā Yamarāja* (etc.). From the time of its establishment until the middle of the nineteenth century the duties of this department probably changed little so far as they concerned the local administration of the capital and the maintenance of peace and order therein. Until the eighteenth century the *senāpatī*, himself resident in the capital, also appointed the district administrative officials of the *van rājadhānī*, who were responsible to him; but in later times authority over these seems to have been divided between the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom*. The department of police (*trahvera*) was under the control of the *Nagarapāla*. The sphere of activity of its members was confined to the capital, which they patrolled with the object of apprehending robbers and giving warning of fires. The prison for the worst offenders, and the court for judging the most serious offences, were also attached to the *Kram Nagarapāla*, the *senāpatī* being chief criminal judge, hence his title *yamarāja* (judge of hell). Certain revenues were also collected by this *kram* in later times.

4. *Kram Nā*, the title of the *senāpatī* of which was *Ōkyā* (or *Brahyā*) *Baladeba* (etc., including the phrase *kṣetrādhipatī*). He might be described as a Minister of Lands, but hardly of Agriculture, since the latter suggests the application of a science unknown in Siam until modern times and which, indeed, was unnecessary in a kingdom the territory of which was so extensive,



the soil so fertile, and where the small population as yet had no thought of growing rice for export. It was the first duty of this minister to urge a somewhat indolent people to begin the cultivation of the fields at the proper season, himself setting the example at the ceremonial First Ploughing. He also saw that the people did not waste their time when they should be attending to their crops; and he had a court in which he was empowered to try cases connected with lands and cattle, and to settle boundary disputes. The work of draining fields and cutting irrigation canals was under his jurisdiction, and his officers supervised the clearing of jungle. It was through his department that the king allotted lands to distinguished officials in recognition of their services, as royal gifts at cremations and so on. He appointed officers (*khā hlvañ senā*) to collect the revenue due from the people on their rice crops and to assemble cattle or buffaloes if they were required by the government. The important *Kram Chāñ* was also under the control of this department. Its special duty was the buying of rice and cattle fodder (also, apparently, ivory and leather) for the royal storehouses, and distributing them in accordance with the requirements of the various departments of the central administration, especially in connection with military expeditions. But the *Senāpatī Kram Nā* only liked the work of buying the royal rice because this was the only work that was profitable to himself; consequently he neglected his other duties. The work of the subordinate officers of this department was particularly fruitful in opportunities for extortion and corruption; and these evils had, by the middle of the Bangkok period, completely undermined the efficiency of the department.

5. *Kram Braḥ Glāñ*, of which the main title of the *senāpatī* was *Ōkyā (Brahṇā) Koṣādhīpatī* (etc.). He



was originally the Minister of the Treasury, and administered the revenue and expenditure of all departments, judging cases arising therefrom in his own court. His work then must have been light, for revenue was small and most of the government work was done by forced labour, which was a responsibility shared by the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom*. When, however, the king began to trade with China, and royal ships were sent thither with the country's merchandise, this work naturally came under the care of the *Brah Glān*. He was consequently brought into contact with the Chinese and Europeans trading to Ayudhyā, and so, probably from the reign of King Drah Dharma, he came to combine the duties of a Minister of the Treasury with those of a Minister of Commerce and Foreign Affairs. For he not only dealt with foreign merchants but, as a natural sequel, received foreign embassies and arranged for their reception at court. Owing to these new duties he also came to be called *Cāu Dā* "lord of the landing stage". During the Ayudhyā period embassies were frequently exchanged between Siam and neighbouring friendly countries such as Tonkin and Cochin-China, and even with such distant states as Persia and Japan; while from 1511, when the first Portuguese envoy was sent to Ayudhyā by Albuquerque, similar relations were opened up with the more important European powers. In early times Siam seems to have had relations with the Chinese Imperial Court on terms approaching equality; but, from about the sixteenth century until the custom lapsed after the reign of King Rāma I, Siam sent tokens to China similar to those which she herself exacted from her tributaries, though China never seems to have assisted her in any way in return. It was owing to the *Brah Glān's* responsibility for matters connected with foreign commerce and embassies



that this minister was the highest official who was well known to Europeans, and he is repeatedly mentioned by all the seventeenth-century writers. His court dealt with cases in which foreigners were implicated, and amongst his officers were those who inspected foreign ships and acted as interpreters. The state kept up by the *senāpatī* in their own households is illustrated by the description which Kaempfer gives¹ of an audience with the *Brah Glān* in 1690, which the latter conducted as if he were a king, being seated behind an audience window at one end of the apartment. Before him were arranged his insignia, and a gilt umbrella was placed on either side, while the body of the hall was occupied on the right and left by two rows of subordinate officials and retainers.

At some time late in the Ayudhyā period, it is not known exactly in which reign, a change, similar to that which had already overtaken the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom* departments, overtook the *Kram Brah Glān*, and the burden of provincial administration was placed on its shoulders. In this case the reason appears to have been that a *Kalāhom* had in some way given offence to the king and his provinces were accordingly taken away from his jurisdiction and placed under the *Brah Glān*. This added responsibility, which included justice, war, revenue, and general administration throughout the southern provinces, completely overwhelmed the *Brah Glān* and necessitated the abandonment of the work of the Treasury, which came to be divided under other departments as we shall see in Chapter IX; while the important work of equipping royal trading ships fell under a subsidiary *kram* controlled by *Brah Śrī Bibad̐hana Rājanakoṣā* (*śākti nā*, 3,000). In the reign of King Rāma I, however, the southern provinces were

¹ *History of Japan*, English edition, 1906, vol. i, p. 28.



again placed under the control of the *Kalāhom*, with the exception of the provinces round the head of the gulf which, from their situation, it was thought could best be administered by the *Cāo Dā*, who also continued to function as a Minister of Foreign Affairs.

6. *Kram Vāñ*, of which the *senāpatī* had the title *Ōkyā Dharmādhipatī* (etc.). He was Minister of the Palace, the seat of the king and hence originally of the administration of justice, which explains this minister's retention of the title *dharmādhipatī*. In later times judicial appointments were still made through this department, although most of the actual administration of justice had become divided, soon after King Paramatrailokanātha's time, between the various more important government departments, as will be explained in Chapter VIII. This *senāpatī* was responsible for all matters concerning the royal residences and their repair and maintenance, the royal ceremonies,* and the expenditure connected with the upkeep of the king's majesty and of the harem. Under his command were all those officials having access to the palace (except the *Mahātlek*), and his department controlled more subsidiary *krams* than did any other. Among these were the *Brah Tāñrvac Vāñ* (*krams* of the left and right). The word *tāñrvac* is an ancient Khmer title, and as used in the inscription of Sūryavarman I on the gate of the royal palace at Añkor Thom it seems to mean some kind of district governor, but in both Siam and modern Cambodia it has the meaning "licitor" or "bodyguard" of the king.¹ Other subsidiary *krams* under the control of the *Kram Vāñ* were those of the royal palanquin, to which were attached goldsmiths, silversmiths, perfumiers, and upholsterers; the royal weapons department; the storehouse in which rice was

* Cœdès, part ii, p. 27.



kept for the royal almsgiving; the royal garden and others. The *Kram Vān* also controlled certain special royal treasuries attached to the palace, and was also in charge of the slaves and freemen allotted to the service of the royal monasteries. He appointed the important provincial officer known as the *yakkrahpātra*, of whom more will be said later, and also, apparently, the *hlvan vān*, or official in charge of the household of each provincial governor. In the Bangkok period the office of *Kram Vān* degenerated because its holder was always an old man who was powerless to administrate and was ignorant of legal matters.

7. *Kram Dharmakāra* (Department of Church Administration), of which the *cāu-kram* (or *mantrī*) had the title *Ōkyā Brahsatec* (etc.). He appointed officials (*khun hmū'n dharmakāra*) in every province to supervise the behaviour of the monks; and, in a special court attached to the department, he tried cases in which monks were accused of serious offences. It was also through his agency that the king appointed high dignitaries of the church throughout the country.

8. *Kram Bhūṣamālā*, of which the title of the *cāu-kram* was *Brah Udaiya Dharma*. This department was entrusted with the royal wardrobes, the royal insignia and weapons, and the perfumes and other requisites for the king's ceremonial ablutions (*mūrdhā-bhīṣeka*) as well as the control of the requisite craftsmen. The fact that all these articles came in contact with the king's person accounts for the importance of this *kram*. There were subsidiary, but still very important, *krams* (*śakti nā*, 3,000), which had similar duties in connection with the royal harem.

9. *Kram Brah Surāsvatī* (often contracted to *Sāstī*), under *Ōkbrah Rājasubhāvatī* (etc.), the chief or central registrar and keeper of the rolls of the people.



Prince Damrong is of opinion ¹ that from the mention in the *Annals* ² of a *sārapāñjī* (great catalogue) having been made, and a *bidhī duk mo'an* (general registration) having been undertaken, for the first time in the reign of King Rāmādhīpatī II, it is probable that it was in this reign that the *Kram Brah Surāsvatī* was established to undertake the work of marking and registering the clients of both military and civil divisions. This work had formerly been undertaken by the *Kalāhom* and *Mahātdaiya* for their respective divisions, but this arrangement had evidently been found unsatisfactory and productive of delay. Under the control of the central department were the subsidiary *krams* (*śakti nā*, 3,000) of the *surāsvatī śāy* and *surāsvatī khvā*, that is of the left and right respectively.

It was the duty of the *Ōkbrah Rājasubhāvatī* to supervise the marking (*sāk lekḥ*) of the *brāi* and *dāṣa* throughout the country. But the officials of the central *kram* only carried out the work in the capital and *van rājadhānī*, the registration of the people in the northern and southern provinces falling to the lot of the *krams* of the right and left respectively. In law courts attached to the central and subsidiary *krams* all cases were tried in which there were disputes as to which patron or department a man should belong. For since the work of some *krams* was lighter than that of others, it often happened that clients who should have belonged to a certain *kram* deserted and sought to attach themselves to other patrons in departments where the work was lighter, thus leaving their own *kram* with insufficient workers. To counteract this movement it was necessary in these cases to deprive the freemen of their right to choose new patrons and send them back to their old *krams*.³

¹ Prince Damrong (3), p. 28. ² *AA.*, vol. i, p. 13. ³ Rāma IV, No. 204.



The main object of the work of the *Sāstī* was to see that there was a correct and efficient distribution of men between the various *krams* of both the civil and military divisions and to assist the chiefs in calling up the men for work. To this end minor registrar officials were appointed throughout the provinces to carry out the work of marking the people and compiling the lists which were called *hān vāv*, literally "kites' tails". One of the first tasks to be carried out at the beginning of a new reign was the making of a new catalogue. The men were marked on the inner and outer side of the arm in alternate reigns¹; and criminals were marked on the forehead. All persons registered seem to have been known as *phū mī jū*, literally, "persons with names,"² that is, presumably, names known to the government. All adult male freemen and redeemable slaves were marked, but with three different kinds of tattoo marks: (1) *sāk khō mū*, persons liable to government labour or military service; (2) *sāk bikāra*, those exempted on account of sickness; (3) *sāk jāhrā*, those exempted by reason of their advanced age. Non-redeemable slaves, including *khā daiya* (those who had voluntarily sold themselves as slaves in order to escape government service) appear to have been marked only by their own masters with private marks, and thus to have escaped the attention of the royal officials.³ *Brāi sam*, who in later times gave all their services to their patrons, not merely for the ordained two years but throughout the life of the latter, were obliged to become *brāi hlvañ* after the death of their patrons.⁴ No *brāi hlvañ* could be unattached, and in case of doubt the lists were searched to discover to what *kram* his relatives belonged. Families crossing the frontier to escape service and those

¹ Prince Damrong (2), p. 52.

³ Bastian, p. 175; Lingat (1), p. 85.

² Bastian, p. 170.

⁴ Rāma IV, No. 328.



who facilitated the desertion of clients were heavily punished.¹ Though monks and women were not required to perform government work, nevertheless their names were recorded in the lists because the former might at any time return to the lay condition, in which case they would once more come under the control of their natural patrons; while it was important to register the women because it was on the *krams* to which they belonged that depended in some measure the distribution of their children.² The provincial *Sāstī* began to enter the children's names when they were three or four years old. The office was one that was extremely liable to corruption because everyone tried to have himself omitted from the rolls; and the patrons similarly favoured those of their clients who made presents to them and oppressed with labour those who had nothing to give them.³ When, in the eighteenth century, payment began to be accepted in lieu of personal service, this money had to be collected by the *Sāstī*'s officials from the patrons, who were responsible for collecting it from their clients, just as they were responsible for bringing them to be marked.

In the Bangkok period the authority of the *Sāstī* had very much degenerated owing to the fact that the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom* had completely taken over the work of registering and conscripting the *brāi* of their provinces and they did not desire any interference from the *Sāstī*. They once more shouldered a duty that had been theirs before the *Sāstī*'s department had been created by King Rāmādhīpatī II. But if they had been unable to carry it out satisfactorily at that early period, it is not surprising that they failed to do so

¹ *Law of Offences against the Government*, arts. 41 and 42.

² *L. L.*, p. 78.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 84.



efficiently in the nineteenth century when they had become overloaded with responsibilities. The result was that the important work of marking and registering the people was neglected and the rolls became confused; but the *Sāstī* was by this time too weak to reprimand those who had taken over his work. In the provinces the registration, so far as it was done at all, was carried out by *khā hlvañ*, or commissioners, sent out by the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom* from the capital; while legal cases which should have been tried in courts of the *Kram Braḥ Surāsvatī* were tried in the courts attached to the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom*. Indeed, the jurisdiction of the *Sāstī* was reduced to registering the men and collecting the exemption money in the capital and *vañ rājadhānī*, which duties appear to have been sadly neglected.

We probably possess more detailed information concerning the work of this department than we do of any other, because the problem of successfully marshalling the man-power of the kingdom was one that was ever uppermost in the mind of the government. Many scattered references to the working of the system are given in the *Old (unclassified) Laws*,¹ from which the general principles set forth in this section and in the last chapter have been deduced. The subject also predominates in a large proportion of the *trā* or sealed documents that were sent out to the provinces, and we shall have a good deal more to say about it in the next chapter. It may, however, be convenient to notice here some of the details of the marking that took place in the year 1870, as recorded in the *Bangkok Calendar* for 1871 (pp. 70-3). On this occasion the undertaking was on a grand scale, as was usual early in a new reign, and the account referred to deals particularly with the

¹ Bradley, ii, pp. 268 sqq.



marking as carried out in the capital. It appears that all the clients resident in the *van rājadhānī*, and whose patrons were resident in Bangkok, had to come to the capital for registration. Thus some of them had to journey as much as 100 miles, and they were often obliged to wait many days or weeks on their arrival, all of which entailed considerable expense to these poor people. The reason for this delay was, firstly, because the *cāu-kram* wanted to get all his people marked at the same time, and hence save himself trouble; and, secondly, to give an opportunity to those people who had a little money to make him presents so that he should expedite their marking and enable them to return home quickly. The mark of the *kram* was printed on the skin with a steel style just deep enough to draw a little blood and into the mark Chinese ink mixed with a little peacock's blood, which formed an indelible mixture, was rubbed. According to this account "men who had to serve in watching about the palace" (palace guards?) were marked on the left side a little below the armpit. The officers engaged in the marking of course levied small fees for their trouble, and this led to oppression.

10. *Kram Braḥ Gajapāla*, the Elephant Department, with the subsidiary Cavalry Department (*Kram Braḥ Āśvarāja*) were transferred from the military division in the reign of King Prāsāda Dōṇ. Their work, being purely military in character, will be considered more fully in Chapter VI.

11. *Kram Lōm Braḥ Rājavāṇi*, or Palace Guards, commanded by a *cānvān* having the title *Braḥ Bejrabijaiya*. The work of this *kram* was entirely military but it was evidently placed in the civil division because it was the duty of its members to guard the palace and ensure the safety of the king while he was



therein. They did not go to war. This *kram* was naturally a very important one, hence the high rank of its commander. Its members were specially and secretly conscripted, and no one outside the *kram* was supposed to know its numbers. Besides guarding the palace forts and walls, it was their duty to fire the signal guns used for scaring away evil spirits from the city at New Year.

Though it would seem incongruous, it appears from the *dāmnīap* that the Medical Department (*Kram Bēdyā*) was attached to the *Kram Lōm Braḥ Rājavāñ*. It included the *hmō sāmhrāp vā gvām*, or physicians engaged in trying cases of poisoning, etc., in a special court for the purpose; and the *hmō roñ braḥ osthā*, or royal physicians; some of whom were required to attend members of the harem, the precincts of which they were, however, allowed to enter only under the strictest surveillance. Attached to the Medical Department was also a *kram* of masseurs (*hmō nvat*), massage being a highly specialized branch of medical practice in Siam.

12. *The Krams of the Court Brahmins.* These included the Brahmins of the *lūk khun sāla hlvañ*, the judicial advisory body that will be dealt with in Chapter VIII, and of which the chiefs were the *Braḥ Mahā Rāja Grū Mahidhara* and the *Braḥ Mahā Rāja Grū Purohita*, whose *śākti nā* grade of 10,000 is indicative of the high respect in which they were held; and the *krams* of the Śiva and Viṣṇu Brahmins who officiated at the royal ceremonies, and of which the *cāñvāñs* had *śākti nā* grade of only 1,000.

13. *Kram Braḥ Glāñ Mahāsampāṭi*, under *Braḥ Rājabhāktī* (etc.), was the most important of the *krams* that between them took over the treasury functions of the *Kram Braḥ Glāñ* after that department became occupied with other matters. This and several other

glāns (treasuries), which operated more or less independently, will be dealt with fully in Chapter IX.

14. *Kram Brah Ālākṣaṇa*, or Royal Scribes Department, under *Ōkbraḥ Śrībhūrīyapriṣā* (etc.), was of great importance in the days before printing was introduced early in the Bangkok period. The duties of the scribes included the inscription of the royal titles on the *subaṇṇapaṭa*, the writing of the royal edicts and orders appointing officials, and the preservation of the laws and other official documents. The *Brah Dharmanūṇ* Law mentions the use of the seal of this department in connection with the royal letter sent periodically to Peking. To this department also belonged the court poets, who wrote verse for the king's delectation. Subsidiary *krams* were the *Rājapāṇḍitya*, or royal pandits, who devoted themselves to the task of editing and copying religious manuscripts; and the *horā*, or astrologers.

As already stated we have fewer intimate details as to the working of the central administration than we have of the provincial. Nevertheless, the *Law of Offences against the Government* throws a little light on the relationship to the government and people of officials in general and particularly of those *khā hlvaṇ*, or royal commissioners, that were sent out to the provinces on government business by one or other of the departments of the central administration. Among the offenders for whom severe penalties are prescribed by this law are the following: *Khā hlvaṇ* who accept presents from freemen so that the latter may be exempted from service (arts. 1, 4, 21, 22, 23, 31); those who falsely pretend that they are *khā hlvaṇ* (art. 3); those who do not obey the royal orders (arts. 8, 10, 23, 89); those who address the king without serious cause (art. 9); those who do not command the people in the king's name,



that is to say, make use of their services illegally for their own purposes (art. 15); those who undertake duties of which they are incapable (art. 19); those that do more than their orders authorize them to do (art. 20); inferior officers who do not report the bad behaviour of a superior (*kṣā hlvan*) entrusted with a mission (art. 16); those who render inaccurate accounts of the missions on which they have been sent (art. 17); persons who attack or prevent a *kṣā hlvan* from carrying out his mission (arts. 1, 96); officials who oppress the people (arts. 22, 23, 31); ambassadors sent to foreign countries who do not obey their instructions (art. 87); and officials who, as a result of drinking and smoking opium, divulge government secrets (art. 43).



CHAPTER V

PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

When the Thai became independent at Sukhodaya, the highest administrative unit comprehended by them was the *mo'ani*, which at the present day is used with the following diverse meanings: kingdom, town, province, country, or region. The original meaning was, however, a town with its surrounding territory, the latter of no very definite extent but usually about two days' journey or thirty miles across. In translating *mo'an* by the word "province" in the present work, it should be understood that what is meant is a town with the surrounding territory over which it exercised jurisdiction.¹

Whatever status Sukhodaya had held under the Khmer empire, it now became an independent unit of the kind the Thai called *mo'an*; and its ruler quickly brought under his sway the neighbouring *mo'ans*, which were Svargaloka (then called Sājanālāya) on the north, Biṣṇuloka (then Sòngèv) on the east, Biciṭra (then Srah Hlvañ) on the south, and Kāmbèñbejra on the west, all situated at a distance of about two days' march from Sukhodaya. Mr. Hocart has remarked² that the standard Indian kingdom in ancient times consisted of four principalities situated at the cardinal points of the king's country. He reminds us that we have the constant mention of "the five peoples" in

¹ According to Leclère (1), p. 205, the word *mo'an* is still used by the Tai hill people of Western Tonkin to mean a territorial division of their country.

² *Ceylon Journal of Science*, Section G, Archaeology, Ethnology, etc., vol. i, pp. 177 sq.



the *Rigveda*, while the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (viii, 14) arranges the nations of the world in groups, one central and one at each point of the compass.

Prince Damrong is of opinion that the *mo'an*s at the cardinal points were each ruled by a son of the king, and their sons in turn seem often to have succeeded them, as was the case later in the *Ayudhyā* period. These princes governed their provinces as almost independent kingdoms, which were known as *mo'an lūk hlvañ*, in contradistinction to the *mo'an hlvañ* or capital province ruled directly by the king. No doubt the princes held their provinces feudally from the king and governed them on the same paternal lines as did the king in his capital province, the sons being sworn to co-operate with their father for mutual defence and for conquest.

The ultimate feudal unit within the *mo'an* was the *grua* or hearth,¹ governed by the *bò grua*, or father of the hearth, i.e. of the family. A number of these units were known as *lūk pāñ* "children of the village", the vassals of the *bò pāñ* or "father of the village", a number of whom as *lūk mo'an* owed allegiance to the *bò mo'an* (or *khañ* or *cāu mo'an*), who ruled over the *mo'an lūk hlvañ* and was, as we have said, a son of the king (*cāu mo'an hlvañ* or *cāu phèn tin*).

The region beyond the four feudal provinces was still outside the kingdom. We know, it is true, from King Rāma Gāmhēn's inscription, that he subjected the country from the Lao states of Brè, Nān, and Hlvañ Brahpāñ in the North to the old kingdom of Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja in the Peninsula, and brought the whole of Pegu beneath his sway; but his control must still have been rather in the nature of overlordship than direct rule, for we know that at that time the administration was constituted on feudal lines, and the king's

¹ Prince Damrong (5), p. 15.



direct control did not extend beyond the confines of the *mo'an hlvañ*. Only a very strong personality, such as Rāma Gāmhèñ undoubtedly possessed, could have retained the fealty of feudal vassals belonging to a variety of races, Thai, Môn, Khmer, and Malay, through such an extensive region as that which his kingdom covered. Hence it was that after his death the Sukhodaya kingdom soon fell back to its original condition of a central *mo'an* with four dependent *mo'ans* at the cardinal points, which, indeed, seems to have been the normal condition of a kingdom thus feudally constituted.

A considerable part of the territories in Central Siam which had previously formed part of Rāma Gāmhèñ's kingdom fell under the power of the prince of Udòñ (near the modern town of Subarṇa), who in A.D. 1350 founded a new capital at Ayudhyā, which was the beginning of the present kingdom of Siam. He ruled as King Rāmādhīpati I on the same paternal lines as did the kings of Sukhodaya; and his kingdom was feudally constituted in the same way with four dependent *mo'ans* at the cardinal points, each ruled by one of his sons and so denominated *mo'an lūk hlvañ*. These provinces were Labapurī on the north, Nagara Nāyaka on the east, Brahprahtèñ on the south, and Subarṇapurī on the west.¹ To the south he probably succeeded to the overlordship of Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja, which formerly owed allegiance to Sukhodaya.

The king of what remained of the Sukhodaya state accepted the suzerainty of Ayudhyā as early as A.D. 1378, but it was not until 1438, in the reign of King Paramarājā II, that its existence as a separate kingdom was finally extinguished and it was placed under the control of the king's eldest son with his capital at Biṣṇuloka.

¹ Prince Damrong (5), p. 22.



Seven years earlier this king had undertaken the conquest of Cambodia, sacking its capital Ankor Thom and setting up another of his sons as its monarch. King Paramarāja II died before he had time to consider any scheme for consolidating the kingdom, the territories of which he had so greatly extended. But a repetition of the disruption which had quickly followed the death of Rāma Gāmhēn of Sukhodaya was fortunately prevented by King Paramarāja's eldest son who, on assuming the throne as King Paramatrailokanātha, was able, with the help of the learned Brahmans and statesmen from Cambodia, to evolve the functionally differentiated central administration which we have studied in the previous chapter.

We must now proceed to consider in greater detail the way in which this system was applied to the provinces. The king's first step seems to have been to bring the four provinces under the direct control of the capital whence, as has been explained, they were administered directly as the *van rājadhānī*, by officials responsible to the great *senāpati* resident in the capital, instead of being under feudal rule. We know this from the *Palatine Law* where it is definitely stated that, of the various newly subjected regions governed as independent states but owing allegiance to the king of Ayudhyā and known generally as *brahyāmahānagara*, the following were *mo'an lūk hlvan*: Biṣṇuloka, Svargaloka, and Kāmbēnbejra.¹ That is to say, the princes who had previously held the four provinces, which were now governed directly from the capital, were sent further afield to rule the newly acquired provinces of the old Sukhodaya kingdom. Sukhodaya itself may still have been ruled by a scion of its old royal family as a vassal

¹ Either the scheme was not then complete or the text of this law is here corrupt, for Labapurī and Singapurī, which later were certainly within the *van rājadhānī*, are here mentioned as *mo'an lūk hlvan*.



of Ayudhyā, for, although it appears in the *Palatine Law* in the list of *brahyāmahānagara* owing allegiance to Ayudhyā, it is not mentioned as a *mo'an lūk hlvan*. The *Palatine Law* mentions four other *brahyāmahānagara*: Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja in the south, an ancient kingdom probably still under a hereditary prince, and whose status probably differed little from that which it had enjoyed since the time of Rāma Gāmhēn; Nagara Rājasimā, in the east (formed from part of the territory of Cambodia, the rest of which kingdom, however, remained for some time a vassal and then regained its independence); Tenasserim and Tavoy in the west, which were bones of contention between the Siamese and Burmese throughout the Ayudhyā period. The last three were probably ruled by high officials entrusted with their government as rewards for their services.

The authority of the capital had thus simply been extended outward as the result of the reorganization of the central administration which now controlled a more extensive territory, the *van rājadhānī*; while the *brahyāmahānagara* were ruled, whether by princes or high officials, in every respect as independent states owing feudal allegiance to the king, just as had been the case with the former *mo'an lūk hlvan*. The kingdom had now reached a stage in which its constitution resembled that of the state in India as initiated under Candragupta and perfected by Aśoka about 200 B.C.; but it would probably be unwise to lay much stress on this resemblance.

The *van rājadhānī* was not treated as one administrative unit but was divided into a number of minor provinces which, as we shall see, were later known as fourth-class provinces, but were then known as *mo'an nōy* (lesser provinces). These were administered by petty officials appointed by the *senāpatī* resident in the capital. It would appear from the *Palatine Law* that



already in King Paramatrailokanātha's time, in addition to those *brahyāmahānagara*, governed by the king's first-class *cāu fā* sons and known as *mo'an lūk hlvañ*, or *mo'an ek* (first-class provinces), there were also some known as *mo'an hlān hlvañ* or *mo'an do* (second-class provinces), governed by second-class *cāu fā* princes. It is not clear where they were but they were probably on the border of the *vañ rājadhānī*.

It may be mentioned here that beyond the confines of the kingdom proper, that is to say on the outskirts of the *brahyāmahānagara*, were the tributary states (*mo'an praḥdeṣa rāja*), governed by their own sovereigns according to their own customs and religions, but at least nominally vassals of the Siamese king, though since they retained their national aspirations, they were always inclined to rebel. In the time of Rāma Gāmbhēn the nature of their allegiance probably differed not very greatly from that of the *brahyāmahānagara*, and they were obliged to send levies of men at the demand of that great warrior king. But the dependence of that monarch's rule on his own personality has been emphasized, and in the Ayudhyā period, though the central administration set up by King Paramatrailokanātha strengthened its hold on the *brahyāmahānagara*, it could demand no more than a nominal allegiance from the tributaries. Thus, instead of men, they were required to send only a formal tribute of gold and silver trees, and a few samples of the country's rarest products. In the *Palatine Law* the states sending tribute to Ayudhyā are enumerated, and among them are Jianhmlai, Jiansēn, Jianrūn, Jianrāy, Brè, Nān, etc., while in the Peninsula were Johore, Malacca, and other Malay states. Cambodia, also, intermittently occupied the status of a vassal and sent the gold and silver flowers. The task of incorporating the tributaries within the kingdom of Siam would have



been the final task of the central administration; but in fact it never proved equal to it and, after the abolition of the old system, it remained for King Rāma V to undertake the incorporation of such of the tributaries as had not been entirely lost.

To return to our consideration of the development of the provincial administration after King Parama-trailokanātha's innovations: The kingdom remained in the stage that he had initiated for about 130 years, the central administration directly controlling the *vañ rājadhānī*, while the king received allegiance from a number of independently administered *brah̥yāmahānagara*. During the last twenty-five years of this period the working of the system must have been considerably disturbed by the invasions and partial domination of the Burmese; and, after the full sovereignty of Siam had been restored by the energy of the great King Nareśvara, it is probable, as Prince Damrong appears to think,¹ that he undertook, not only the repopulation of the northern provinces, the inhabitants of which had been largely removed to Ayudhyā during the Burmese wars, but also a further stage in the centralization of the administration. It would seem that it was at this time that the *cāu fā* princes or their lineage, whose power was likely to be dangerous to the supreme government, and who in fact had already often rebelled, were superseded by high officials appointed by the king. These governors were obliged to drink the water of allegiance like any other officials.²

¹ Prince Damrong (3), p. 40.

² A similar change seems to have taken place, at least partially, in Cambodia, where the princely rulers of the *dey*, known as *sdach-dranh*, were superseded by governors who were officials (Leclère (1), pt. 3, chap. 3, and p. 209). These governors, on being newly appointed by the king, were accompanied to their provinces by a royal commissioner, who proclaimed them publicly, thus making it clear to the people that the governor held his appointment from the king (op. cit., p. 213). Perhaps the same usage prevailed in Siam.



In bringing about these reforms, King Nareśvara abolished the *brahyāmahānagara*¹ and constituted the provinces outside the *vañ rājadhānī* in three classes, known as *mo'an ek*, *mo'an do*, *mo'an trī* (first, second, and third-class provinces respectively). The details of this arrangement given in the *Law of the Provincial Hierarchy* reflect more particularly the condition of things in the eighteenth century, but in fact few variations were introduced from the time the system was established by King Nareśvara until it was abolished by King Rāma V. From this law we learn that there were only two first-class provinces, Biṣṇuloka in the north and Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja in the south (Nagara Rājasimā was promoted first-class in the Bangkok period, probably in the third reign). The second-class provinces were Svargaloka, Sukhodaya, Kāmbhēbejra, Bejapūraṇa, Nagara Rājasimā (formerly), and Tenasserim; while those denominated third-class were Bijaiya, Bicitra, Nagara Svarga, Cāndapūraṇa, Jaiyā, Bāṭaluṇ, and Jumbhara.

Each of the first, second, and third-class provinces had brought under its sway a varying number of minor provinces like those that made up the *vañ rājadhānī*, and which were similarly denominated fourth-class provinces.²

¹ Nearly two hundred years later Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja was for a few years elevated to the status of a *brahyāmahānagara* by King Tāk, who gave the governor the power of an independent king, with a *subarṇapaṭa* (gold tablet of style and title) and with *argamahāsenāpālī* and *cātustambha* having rank equal to those at Dhanapurī. But King Rāma I reduced Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja to its former status of a first-class province with officials of suitable rank. (Prince Damrong (6), pp. 62, 63.)

² According to La Loubère (p. 82), at the end of the seventeenth century there were thirty-four fourth-class provinces under the control of the capital (i.e. making up the *vañ rājadhānī*) and the *Law of the Provincial Hierarchy* corroborates this number and gives their names. La Loubère also gives the names of the major provinces known to him in the north and south, but omits Bicitra, Nagara Svarga, and Jumbhara, while adding Johore and Pattani, which were, in fact, tributaries, and



King Nareśvara's reorganization of the provinces of the kingdom into three classes seems to bear little relation to the old division into two classes of those *brahyāmahānagara* ruled by *cāu fā* princes. The two first-class provinces were probably given that status alone because they had formerly been ruled almost as independent kingdoms on a level with Ayudhyā. Indeed, Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja had enjoyed the status of a kingdom from very early times and, since it frequently rebelled and is mentioned in the *Annals* as refusing to send tribute, it seems to have enjoyed practically the status of a tributary even in the seventeenth century or later. So far as Biṣṇuloka was concerned, King Paramaṭrailokanātha had even transferred his capital there for the last twenty-five years of his reign, and it had since always been ruled by a very high prince. La Loubère¹ remarks that Biṣṇuloka had formerly been governed by hereditary lords, and that when he wrote it was still a city of great commerce, fortified with fourteen bastions, while justice was still administered in the former palace of the princes. But the same authority adds elsewhere² that "the Kings of Siam have ruin'd and destroy'd the most potent Tchaou-Meuang, as much as they could, and have substituted in their place some Triennial Governors by commission. These Commission Governors are called Pouran [*phū rān*]".

The first-class provinces were also of high importance to the defence of the kingdom as being large frontier

the former became entirely independent about this time. He enumerates the fourth-class provinces dependent on each of these major provinces as follows: Biṣṇuloka, 10; Sukhodaya, 7; Svargaloka, 8; Bijaiya, 7; Kāmbēnbejra, 10; Bejapūrāṇa, 2; Nagara Rājasimā, 5; Bāṭaluṇ, 8; Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja, 20; Jaiyā, 2; Tenasserim, 12; Cāṇḍapūrāṇa, 7.

¹ L. L., p. 4.

² L. L., p. 83.



territories. Prince Damrong believes¹ that Nagara Rājasimā was promoted first-class in the Bangkok period, after the suppression of the Viancāndra rebellion, since it thenceforward had the important task of policing the eastern part of the kingdom. He also believes that some of the second-class provinces (Tenasserim, Nagara Rājasimā before it was promoted, and Bejapūraṇa) were thus distinguished because, though not so important as the first-class, they were nevertheless great frontier provinces; while Sukhodaya, Svargaloka, and Kāmbhē-bejra were similarly distinguished because since early times they had been under princely rulers, and they continued to be important during the Ayudhyā period. They were also required, as one manifestation of the government's system of espionage, to watch the loyalty of the first-class provinces and see that they did not spread their power too far. The third-class provinces were those which, at least in later times, were of less importance but had been used to independent rule. The officials who governed the first and second-class provinces had *śākti nā* grade 10,000. But it is known² that those of the first-class had rank nearly equal to that of the *argamahāsenāpatī* with *yaśa*, *cāu brahyā*; while that of the governors of second-class provinces was only *brahyā*. Governors of third-class provinces had *śākti nā* grade 5,000 and *yaśa*, *brahyā* or *brah*.

It was probably also from the time of King Nareśvara's reforms, with their effect of lessening the power of the provincial governors, that the authority of the central government began to spread further outward bringing the complete centralization of the administration a stage nearer realization, along the lines which it should logically have followed to a conclusion, but which in fact it was soon to desert. It has already

¹ Prince Damrong (2), p. 195. ² Prince Damrong (2), p. 195 fn.



been mentioned that we definitely know from La Loubère that in King Nārāyaṇa's reign the governors of the provinces were all responsible to the *Mahātdaiya*, who thus controlled all the internal affairs of the civil administration and the people of the civil division throughout the kingdom; while the *Kalāhom* similarly commanded the military division of the population throughout the kingdom and was generalissimo of the armies. The *Kram Vān* appointed the important official known as a *yakkrahpātra* to each province, where he acted as chief judge and as a check on the governor; and he also appointed the *hlvañ vāñ*, or officer in charge of each governor's household. The *Sāstī* attempted to control the registration of the population throughout the country; while *Brahmā Baladeba* endeavoured to extend his authority over the administration of the lands throughout the provinces.

It should be mentioned here that, advantageous though it was to the preservation of the integrity of the state, this growth of centralization was prejudicial to the welfare of the people of the provinces. The reason for this was that, whereas in the days of the *brahṃāmahānagara* the comparatively small amount of revenue levied from the people by the prince and his court was expended within the province, from the time of this growth of centralization there began that drain on the provinces which was during the next two and a half centuries to impoverish them; and which had for its object merely the aggrandizement of the royal court and capital, and the enrichment of the great ministers at the capital. Moreover the possibility of this growth of centralization being accompanied by an efficient provincial administration was further prevented by the fact that not all the departments of the central administration were able to extend their authority outwards



with the same amount of vigour, the officials were unequal to the additional responsibility thrown on them, their duties lay far from the king's eye and, unfortunately, a spirit of competition rather than of co-operation was all too evident.

The result of these tendencies appears to have been a struggle to obtain possession of the entire control of certain provinces by the more powerful ministers, and this control carried with it the administration of justice and, what was even more attractive, the management of large revenues. Naturally the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom*, having large forces of men under their command, were in a position to attain success in this struggle; and, as stated in the last chapter, it seems to have suited King Bedarājā's purpose, with the object of unifying command of the troops after the rebellion of Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja in 1691, to allow these two great ministers to divide the administration of the whole country between them. Thus it was that all the provinces north of Ayudhyā, including the fourth-class ones immediately dependent upon the capital, came under the control of the *Mahātdaiya*, who himself appointed the governors and chief officials¹; while in the same way all provinces south of Ayudhyā similarly came under the control of the *Kalāhom*.² In theory complete centralization was thus attained; but the manner in which it was brought about was such that functional differentiation was sacrificed, with resulting loss of efficiency. This led to the condition on which we have already remarked, in which some *krams*, notably the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom*, were overloaded with responsibility, while others had little to do; and

¹ *Brah Dharmanūñ Lao*, second part, art. 1.

² In later times in Cambodia the provinces were similarly divided between the control of several high ministers, no doubt in imitation of the Siamese usage. (Leclère (1), pp. 195, 196.)



consequently administration largely gave place to exploitation. The *cātustambha* still continued to carry out their duties, though indifferently, within the *van rājadhānī*, being responsible to the *Mahātdaiya* or *Kalāhom*, just as were the officials of the first, second, and third-class provinces.¹ A change of considerable importance, though it made little difference to the general trend of affairs, occurred sometime in the eighteenth century when a *Kalāhom*, as has already been said, having given offence to the king, was punished by the transfer of his provinces to the control of the *Cāu Dā*, who at that time had little to do. King Rāma I, however, reverted to the earlier arrangement with the exception that he left the maritime provinces round the head of the Gulf under the control of the *Cāu Dā* whom it was thought would be best able to administer them because he was concerned with the commerce of the ports.² One other change in the system of some importance was that during the late Ayudhyā and early Bangkok periods, certain fourth-class provinces were removed from the control of the major provinces on which they had been dependent and were placed directly under the *Mahātdaiya* or *Kalāhom*. The reason for this was political, it occasionally being found necessary to reduce the strength of the more distant major

¹ *Brah Dharmanūñ Law*, second part, arts. 1 and 2. It may be noted here that there seems to have been a division of provinces of all classes into right and left; but as to whether a province was denominated right or left seems to bear no relation to whether it was under *Kalāhom* or *Mahātdaiya*. It may be that this application of the dual organization to provinces may be older than Bedarāja's reign, and may be an arbitrary distinction to signify the sides of the audience hall on which governors were to take their places when called to audience before the king at the capital. Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja, with twenty fourth-class provinces, had more than had any other major *mo'an* except the capital and, according to the *dānnīap* found there and shortly to be quoted, they were divided into four grades according to their importance and those of each grade were, apparently arbitrarily, divided into right and left.

² Prince Damrong (6), p. 15.



provinces in order to prevent their getting beyond the control of the central government.

Having considered the general characteristics of the system of provincial administration, we now turn to the organization of the *krams* and officials of the various classes of provinces. For this our sources of information are, firstly, the *Law of the Provincial Hierarchy*, which gives us the *dāṁniap* of the more important officials of all classes of provinces; and, secondly, a valuable document dating from A.D. 1815, which was brought to light a few years ago at Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja and published by Prince Damrong.¹ This document gives in greater detail the *dāṁniap* of officials of the numerous *krams* of that important province.

The point that immediately strikes one on beginning to study these records is that the administration of the major provinces, since the time they were first established as *brahyā mahānagara*, was modelled on that of the capital; but in course of time small differences arose, especially no doubt in the case of those provinces situated furthest from the capital. But it is probable that not all the variations that we note in the provincial *dāṁniap* are due to degeneration of the model provided by the capital; in some cases, such as the ancient province (and formerly kingdom) of Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja, we should expect to find survivals of forms independently evolved and perhaps dating from an earlier period. The effect of the reduction in status of the *brahyāmahānagara* to provinces of first- or second-class is shown, not so much in the change of titles and functions of officials, but rather in the decrease of their rank and power as compared with those of the corresponding officials of the central administration.

¹ Prince Damrong (2), pp. 192 sqq.



On referring to the *dāmniap* of Nagara Śrī Dharma-rāja, we find that the governor¹ (*phū sāmrec rājakāra mo'an*) with the title of *Cāu Brahyā Dharmarāja* (etc.) and *sākti nā* grade 10,000, was assisted by a *palāt*, or deputy, with the *yaśa*, *brah*, and *sākti nā* grade 3,000. These officials really corresponded to the King and the *Vān Nā* in the capital, or to the prince and his heir in the old *mo'an lūk hlvan*. Then follow three officials with the *sākti nā* grade of 1,600, the first of which is the *yakkrahpātra*, or official appointed by the king to act as a check on the governor, and to which there was no corresponding post in the capital. The two other officials of this grade were the *bala* (= *kalāhom*) and the *mahātdaiya*, corresponding to the *argamahāsenāpatī* of the capital and formerly in charge of the military and civil divisions respectively of the province. In later days their duties became confused and they together appear to have commanded the garrison if there was one, but under the orders of the governor. According to the *Brah Dharmanūñ Law*² the *bala* in all the provinces seem in later times to have been appointed by the high generals (*Tejo* and *Dāynāñ*) of the *Kalāhom*'s department. Following these higher officials in the *dāmniap* are eight officials of 1,400 *sākti nā* grade, including the *mo'an*, *vāñ*, *glāñ*, and *nā*, corresponding to the *cātustambha* of the capital, the *cāu dā*, and *sāstī* of the centre, right, and left. All these officials from the *yakkrahpātra* downwards had *yaśa*, *brah* or *hlvan*. The *kram vāñ* was concerned with the governor's household and the management and repair of his palace. It included the subsidiary *krams* of the *mahātīlek*, ecclesiastical affairs, physicians, astrologers, gentlemen-at-arms,

¹ The term *cāu mo'an* was used in a generic sense for governors of provinces of all classes down to the nineteenth century.

² Second part, arts. 8 and 9.



a law court, palace guards, and craftsmen, all of which go to show the great state in which governors of the first-class provinces still contrived to live. This is indeed further borne out by the list of the insignia of the governor and *palāt*, appended to the *dāṁniap*. A number of other *krams* are mentioned, usually with duplication into right and left, of which the *cāu-krams* had *śākti nā* grade below 1,400. These *krams* included those of the bodyguard (*kram āṣā*), state barges, scribes, Brahmans, and officials in charge of the royal monastery servants. The administration of Biṣṇuloka, so far as our more limited information goes, was constituted on lines that were generally similar to those of Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja.

It is interesting to note that though the organization of the population in civil and military divisions had formerly existed in Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja and other provinces, as we know from the persistence of the offices of *bala* and *mahātdaiya* and from historical evidence, yet in course of time it had degenerated. This is evident from the fact that the *krams* of the military division seem to have disappeared almost entirely; while the original nature of the dual organization has obviously been lost, since the *palāt*, *yakkrahpātra*, *mo'ari*, and *nā* are placed on the right, the *mahātdaiya*, *vāṇi*, and *glāṇi* being on the left of the *dāṁniap*. No doubt the older principle of division had been extinguished here, as throughout the kingdom, in Bedarāja's reign. At that time, as we have seen, the members of all *krams* of the southern provinces, including Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja, had been placed under the *Kalāhom*; and the fact that the provincial governors in later times would hardly have been allowed to keep standing armies would have hastened the disappearance of the military *krams*.

The administration of the second and third-class



provinces was constituted on similar lines to that of the first-class, but naturally it was on a somewhat more restricted scale both in regard to the rank of the officials and the number of *krams*. The governor of a second or third-class province was distinguished by the term *phū vā rājakāra mo'an*, and had the *yaśa*, *brahyā* with *śakti nā* grade, as has been mentioned, 10,000 in the first case and 5,000 in the second. Their *palāts* had only 1,200 and 1,000 respectively, while of correspondingly reduced ranks were their *yakkrahpātra*, *bala*, *mahātdaiya*, *cātustambha*, and *sāstī*. There were probably also some minor *krams* that are not mentioned in the law.

The revenues of the governors of the major provinces, though no doubt much reduced from what they had been before King Nareśvara's reforms were introduced, remained very considerable. In King Nārāyaṇa's reign, according to La Loubère,¹ they included, besides presents from the king, one half of the tax levied on the rice lands, all legal confiscations, 10 per cent of fines, the customs dues on ships in the maritime provinces, extraordinary taxes when they were able to levy them and thus arrogate to themselves the prerogatives of sovereignty (presumably in the more distant provinces), and the proceeds of such commercial ventures as they were able to carry on in imitation of the king. They were also allowed the services of a number of *brāi hlvañ* as boatmen, etc. Though sons often succeeded their fathers as governors, these posts were frequently given to officials as a reward for services in the palace, since the further a high official was from the king the greater were his ease and his profits.²

With regard to the governors of the fourth-class provinces (*phū rāñ mo'an*), their *śakti nā* grade was equal to that of the *bala* or *mahātdaiya* of the particular

¹ L.L., p. 83.

² L.L., p. 106.



major province to which they were attached ; but in the case of the fourth-class provinces immediately dependent on either of the great departments of the central administration, the *śākti nā* grade of their governors was 3,000, that is to say, as high as the *yakkrahṇpātra* of a first-class province. The *phū rāṇi mo'an* was entitled only to such revenue as the king (or governor of the province on which he was dependent) might allocate to him at the time of his appointment ; but if, during the absence of his superior governor, he was made acting governor (*phū rākṣā mo'an*) of the major province, he was allowed half the profits due to his superior, who retained the other half.¹ No doubt the revenues of governors of all classes of provinces were considerably modified after King Nārāyaṇa's reign by the increasing power of those great departments of the central administration that concerned themselves with the affairs of the provinces.

The governor of every fourth-class province was assisted by a *palūt* and *yakkrahṇpātra*, but apart from these, provinces of this category were each administered entirely by a body of minor officials known as the *kramakāra*, there being nothing in the nature of *argama-hāsenāpatī* or *cāṇustambha*. The officials of the *kramakāra* would appear to have been in earlier times appointed by the governor of the minor province, or at least by the governor of the major province on which the fourth-class province was dependent.² But later they were appointed by the appropriate departments of the central

¹ L. L., p. 84. Light is thrown on the reason for this appointment of acting governors (which would appear to have been confined to the fourth-class provinces of the *vaṇ rājadhānī*) by Van Vliet (*JSS.*, vol. vii, 1910, pt. i, p. 60), who states that in the reign of King Prāsāda Dōṇ, governors were compelled to reside in the capital, their work being done by assistants. This was probably a temporary variation of the normal rule, actuated by jealousy and suspicion, emotions which also caused this king to transfer his ministers from office to office every few months.

² *Law of Treason*, art. 7, Bradley, ii, p. 248.



administration as those of the fourth-class provinces of the *van rājadhānī* had always been.¹ The officials of the *kramakāra* included the *cā mo'an*, whose duties within the restricted sphere of a minor province were similar to those of the *Nagarapāla*; judiciary officials known as the *bēn* and *subhamātrā* (the former being the keeper of the law texts and pronouncer of judgment in accordance therewith); a *sāstī*, or registrar; and several *hmū'n khvèn*, or district officials.

Each district official had within his *khvèn* a number of communes, known as *tāmpal*, each of which was in charge of an official called a *kāmnān*. He in turn was responsible for several *pān*, or villages, each under a *pū hjai pān*, or village headman. The latter were chosen by the governor of the province, for there was a complete absence of that local self-government that is such an important feature of ancient Indian polity, and which would have been quite incompatible with Siamese administrative ideas. The *pān*, or village, was the territorial administrative unit in later times, just as it was in earlier feudal days; but, whereas it was formerly governed in a patriarchal manner by a man who owed his administrative appointment to the fact that he was the natural head of a number of families (*bō pān*), in the later period he was an official appointed by the government. With the other officials of the *khvèn* it was his duty to control those people who happened to live in his village, whether they were bound to him by the personal relationship of patron and client or not. The factor of territory therefore continued to be of importance in the relations between the officials and the people under their charge, though it had long since ceased to have any connection with the feudal system which, as we have seen, survived only on a basis of

¹ *Brah̄ Dharmanūṣ̄ Law*, second part, arts. 4, 5, 21, 22.



personal attachment. This system was organized in the provinces in exactly the same way as it was within the *van rājadhānī*, but the clients were dependent on patrons resident in the provincial capitals, and hence were forbidden to wander from one province to another. Presumably after the close of the seventeenth century not only the governor and provincial officials, but also the *Mahātdaiya*, *Kalāhom*, and *Brah Glān* received a portion of the fruits of the labour of the provincial clients. The officials charged with provincial administration depended for their living on a percentage of the fines which they inflicted, and the revenue in kind or in money they collected in their particular districts; and in the *dānniāp* of Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja, to which we have referred above, these matters are carefully noted in the case of each official.

One of the most important duties of the minor officials was in connection with the registration and distribution of land; and we may take this opportunity of discussing a little more fully the Siamese system of land tenure. We have seen that it was one of the Siamese freeman's most ancient rights, in return for his personal services to the government, to claim as much land as his family could cultivate, not exceeding 25 *rāi*. When a freeman wanted to clear land for cultivation the procedure was as follows¹: He approached the local official in charge of the district where the land in question was situated, this step being known as *cōn nā* (literally, "to take possession of a field"). The official drew up a document known as a *pai yīap yām* ("measurement document") in attestation of this step having been taken, and this paper was valid for a year.

¹ Art. 47 of the *Law of Offences against the Government* fixes the punishment appropriate to those who proceed to clear land without first notifying the officials.



During that time the matter had to be brought before the notice of the local representative of the Ministry of Lands who publicly proclaimed it with the object of discovering whether the land already had an owner. If it was not claimed, a title-deed called variously *trā tèn*, *pai còñ*, or *chanot*, according to the nature of the land, was drawn up in which full particulars were set forth; and, after payment of suitable fees to the officials concerned, this deed gave the applicant full rights over the land granted to him. He could sell, mortgage, or devise it; but nevertheless his right remained in theory only that of a usufructuary since the king retained the right of expropriation. This he carried into effect when the land was required for public purposes or if it was left uncultivated for three years, cultivation being from the earliest times the first essential condition for the occupation of land. If the owner sold, mortgaged, or devised his land, the title-deed had to be renewed; or if he did not wish to hold it any longer he had to report the fact and renounce his right to its disposal, which act was called *vên nā gū'n*.¹ In later times families seem to have gradually acquired estates up to 80 or 100 *rài* or even 200 *rài*. Princes and high officials could also buy land like other people and since, moreover, their large bodies of household retainers were considered as being members of their families, they were allowed to acquire extensive domains, up to as much as 10,000 *rài*. These lands were cultivated by their slaves and clients, the latter having their own smaller estates in the vicinity and tending to cluster near to their patrons' domains.² But though there appears to have been in later times a tendency to the acquisition of large land holdings on the part of the princes and high officials, there was really no reversion to the old condition of territorial

¹ Dilock, pp. 72 sqq.; L. L., p. 71.

² Dilock, pp. 96, 97.



feudalism. The estates of the officials were comparatively small, the clients were attached to their patrons on a personal basis and could change them if the king gave permission; and, moreover, the great landowners usually did not reside on their lands but far away in the capital.¹

Since the authority of the central government over the provincial officials was never strong, especially in the more distant provinces, and as, moreover, these officials were liable to instant dismissal at any time, they naturally strove to amass wealth while still in office. This, of course, led to the oppression of the provincial population, and, as the patrons were usually officials, the natural protection which the feudal system should have afforded to the clients largely ceased to be efficacious. The oppressed freemen either sought the shelter of the jungle, or sold themselves as slaves to some powerful prince or very high official such as a provincial governor who was strong enough to protect these runaways, and at the same time found it more profitable to do so than to oppress them as did the officials of lower degree. The fear of losing the services of the country's man-power in this manner gave rise to a good deal of legislation on the subject on the part of the central government. Thus article 71 of the *Law of Offences against the Government* insists that persons appointed to be governors of provinces must conduct themselves properly and consider the welfare of the people. Articles 12, 78, and 97 of the same law deal with the

¹ It may be mentioned here that just as Leclère regards the King of Cambodia as a usufructuary, so he considers (Leclère (2), pp. 255 sqq.) the land a national possession in that country. I cannot accept either of these contentions in the case of Siam, being as they are contrary to Siamese thought and probably the result of looking at the subject from a European point of view. The royal domain which the king reserved for the requirements of his own household was really only a part of a much larger royal domain—the kingdom.



oppression of the inhabitants of the provinces by the provincial officials; while articles 14, 21, 23, 49, and 57 are concerned with offences of a similar nature but more particularly in the direction of carrying off the property and women of the people. Article 6 of the *Law of Treason* provides for the punishment of officials from 10,000 down to 800 *śukti nā* grade who oppress the people with the result that they become discontented and go and associate with robbers and outcasts. In the fourth reign of the Bangkok dynasty the government was still confronted with the perennial problem of dealing with those who oppressed the people.¹

The laws also throw a little light on other aspects of the relations of the provincial officials to the central government on the one hand and to the people on the other. The *Law of Offences against the Government* deals with the punishment of governors who do not carry out orders, particularly in connection with the construction of fortifications, or do what they are not supposed to do (arts. 5, 6, 68); of governors who give offices to those by whom they have been bribed (art. 40); and of officials or others who give rise to rumours of a nature calculated to disturb the tranquillity of the people (art. 32). Similarly, the *Law of Treason* punishes with death those governors who do not pay homage to the king (art. 1); directs that the provincial officials must, in case of attack, organize the defence in order to prevent the enemy from carrying off the population (arts. 7 and 8); while if, at the time of this attack, the governor is absent on a visit to a neighbouring governor with the result that his officials fail to organize the defence properly, he is to be held responsible and punished by death (art. 8).

As mentioned in the last chapter, the custom of

¹ Rāma IV, Nos. 223, 331, etc.



sending *trā*, or sealed despatches, from the great departments of the capital to the provincial governors and officials, was the means of preserving to us a good deal of information on the actual working of the administration, at least during the latter part of the Ayudhyā and the earlier part of the Bangkok periods. In the keeping of the National Library at Bangkok are a large number of such documents, often in fragmentary condition, written on accordion-pleated manuscripts, and dating mostly from the first three reigns of the present dynasty, only a few records of this kind having survived from the time when Ayudhyā was capital. The documents are stamped with the seals of the departments by which they were issued, most frequently the *Mahātdaiya* or *Kalāhom*, and they deal with such diverse matters as inquiries about the rainfall and condition of the crop in various districts; requests for certain officials, presumably of doubtful loyalty, to come and drink the water of allegiance in the capital; orders to governors to collect provisions for the supply of an army engaged in a campaign, or to conscript troops as reinforcements; orders that timber be obtained for boat-building; requests that runaway slaves be captured and sent back to the capital; questions concerning fortifications, ecclesiastical affairs, ceremonies, corvée, finance, collection of taxes, and white elephants.

A document the contents of which are so illuminating that it is now proposed to give a full and fairly literal translation of it, omitting only one or two repetitions, was published by the National Library in 1928, under the title *Brahṛājakāmhnat vidhī pak grōn hua mō'an grān phēn tin Brah Cẩu Dầy Srah* (Edict on the Method of Provincial Administration in the Reign of King Dầy Srah). It is a royal edict dating from A.D. 1727, in the reign of King Dầy Srah, whose times were for



the most part peaceful and prosperous, and the many interesting details therein mentioned collectively form a very vivid picture of the condition of provincial affairs and the nature of the problems that faced the government in what may be regarded as normal, if decadent, times, towards the end of the Ayudhyā period. Presumably a copy of the edict was originally sent to every provincial governor, the one preserved in the National Library being, however, the only one that has survived. The document speaks for itself so eloquently that it would seem superfluous to add to the translation much, if anything, in the way of commentary or explanation.

“Instructions given for the guidance of governors, acting governors and provincial officials by order of the king :—

“When the king appoints a man to take charge of a province (of any class), or when the king sends him to war and he neglects to make periodical reports, or if he returns to the capital without being recalled,¹ he merits punishment ; the maximum penalty being death. After he has reported and when he is recalled, he must come only after the receipt of the recall, otherwise he will be punished.

“Governors must never take women from the people as wives, or to be servants, except with the consent of the parents. The officials may make the people cut wood for the use of the governor, but if they want to make use of it for themselves they must pay for the labour at the rate usually paid in that locality.

“Governors must keep the peace in their provinces. If the work of keeping the peace is beyond the power of

¹ This refers to the custom according to which officials of high rank may not leave or come to the capital without first obtaining the royal permission, the underlying idea being to guard against surprise.



the governor, he must report to the minister on whom that particular province is dependent, for the information of the king. If the governor sits in judgment on legal cases he must have the *yakkrahpātra* to try the case with him. When a person from another province (a stranger) comes into a legal case he must be introduced to the governor by the *yakkrahpātra*, and by no one else. On receipt of documentary instructions from the capital, the governor must see that the instructions are legal. If any instructions are received that are illegal he shall not follow them, but he shall send both the document and the messenger who brought it back to the minister at the capital.

“On arrival at his province, the governor shall inspect its boundaries so that he shall know their location. If he finds places where outposts are required he shall establish them, and when he finds sections that are difficult to watch he shall block the path by felled trees. Foreign traders who come without passports should be arrested and sent to the capital. The governor shall keep the list of men available for military service in each category. If people should run away from their homes and patrons, the governor should send to see where they have settled and the cause of their desertion. If he sees signs of the people assembling and combining together he must find out the cause of it. If it is found that this movement is the result of oppression on the part of someone, that fact must be reported. He must have a list of the elephants in the province, their size and other particulars. He must get to know the strangers that come to live in the province so that they can be called upon for service. If there are vacancies among the officials, the governor shall collect the senior men and appoint them to fill the places. The men who man the outposts shall be



well looked after, and they shall be strengthened by men who are found unattached to any patron. If there is an order from the *Sāstī* for these men from the outposts to go and serve elsewhere, the order from the *Sāstī* shall not be obeyed, but report must be made to the minister for orders.

“ Provincial officials of all degrees must be kept to their work. If one of them is absent, then the governor is to find out where he has gone and to see that the work does not suffer on account of his absence. He should send out patrols to the boundaries of his province once a month. After their return they must report on what they found. If an order comes from a department of the central administration concerning preparations for war, or concerning protecting and improving the capital, or demanding that the defences should be strengthened, the receipt of the order must be acknowledged and the order complied with at once. In case it is found to be beyond the power of the governor to carry out the order he shall report accordingly.

“ If the inhabitants of the locality are required to undertake government work (digging canals, etc.) the officials shall only keep enough men to carry out their particular routine duties and shall let the others go and help in this special government work. Officials with nothing to do should also go and assist. Provincial governors and officials must pay full attention to their work and consider the execution of it as the most important part of their lives. If it is found that the people have their property taken away by officials when the latter are going among them on duty, the *yakkrahpātra* shall make enquiries; and if it is found to be the case they shall return any property or animals that have been taken. In case property cannot be returned the fact must be reported to the capital. If



the officials oppress the people the matter shall be investigated and reported to the capital, the officials themselves being sent with the report. In the case of misbehaviour on the part of the governor, the *yakkrah-pātra* must report; in the case of the *yakkrah-pātra* the governor must report, or if both misbehave the other officials must report.¹

“The numbers of the people in their various categories (*brai hlvan*, *brai sam*, etc.); the number of people living in the various districts and the *krams* to which they belong; the number of the beasts of burden, strangers and people in hiding (that is, fled from their patrons), all must be known. Their location and how far they are from the town must also be recorded. The extent of immigration and emigration must be known to the governor. If the people of his province go away and settle in another province he must inform the authorities of that province. If people come from other provinces and settle without passports from the authorities of their original provinces, the fact should be reported to the minister in the capital. The number of communes in each district and the number of people in each must be known. The official in charge of the commune must know the original number of people in his charge, and the number of the people who come in and go out. He must keep in touch with them all. If the *yakkrah-pātra* wants work done and requires men, and the local officials cannot supply them, then these local officials must be punished by the *yakkrah-pātra*, and he must also bear the blame. If men from a provincial district are required for government work and they cannot be found either the register is at fault or the men have run away. In either case the

¹ A good example of the working of the system of espionage already mentioned.



yakkrahpātra and district officials are at fault for not keeping the register properly or for not patrolling the district thoroughly. When in search of such men who have run away, the patrol will go forward until it meets the next patrol. If the patrols cannot find the men they must return to their headquarters and report. Such reports must be made every month.

“The officials shall give their whole attention to their work, to keep the peace of the country for the sake of the happiness of the people; only such men shall be appointed provincial officials as are good men; and men in positions of trust who betray that trust shall be heavily punished by molten silver being poured down their throats. All these instructions must be obeyed, failing which the punishment ranges up to death. When the officials go to the capital or to the ceremony of drinking the water of allegiance they shall be questioned by the minister on whom their province depends and by the Minister of the Palace with regard to the work of that province, the welfare of the people, and about the strangers and deserters living or hiding in that region. When subjected to questionings the officials shall give all true details in full, failing which they shall receive punishments ranging up to death. In the cultivation season the governor, *yakkrahpātra* and officials shall urge the people to cultivate the land. Work which can be done in days must not be done in months. Every official must take a copy of these instructions; the original shall be kept in the custody of the *yakkrahpātra*. If a new *yakkrahpātra* is appointed he shall receive it from his predecessor. The new *yakkrahpātra* shall obey these instructions in all respects and any others that may have preceded them, failing which he will be punished in degrees ranging up to death.”



The following is a translation of an edict dating from A.D. 1810, the first year of the reign of King Rāma II, which was published in Siamese by Prince Damrong.¹ In this case the edict is in the first place addressed to the *Surāsvatī* (Head of the Registrar's Department), to be by him passed on to the provincial officials, and it therefore deals primarily with the organization and registration of the country's available man-power, thus illustrating many points that have been mentioned in Chapter III, Section 3, and Chapter IV, Section 9. The subject was one of the first importance to the Siamese government at all times, and more especially so at a time when the country was still in a weakened condition and was still threatened by the Burmese menace. The administrative machinery and the condition of the people had been profoundly disorganized since the fall of Ayudhyā; and the king, who was anxiously engaged in an effort to restore his kingdom to its former status, incidentally gives us in this edict an insight into the difficulties that beset the corvée system which it would be difficult to obtain from documents issued in more normal times.

"Edict given to the *Brah Surāsvatī* to be communicated to the officials and the servants of the princes both of *kram* rank and without *kram* rank, of both the King's and *Uparāja's* family, and to governors and officials of provinces of all the four classes throughout the kingdom : Whereas His Majesty (his titles), wishing to protect the Buddhist faith, the priests, the nuns and the Brahmans and the people of the whole country within His Majesty's dominions who are under his protection, and to cause them to work and live happily ; now he appeared in the *Tusiṭa Mahā Prāsāda* before his ministers and high officials, kneeling in audience

¹ Prince Damrong (2), pp. 47 sqq.



according to their rank. And by His Majesty's command it is hereby decreed that :—

“ It has been the custom of kings from old time to preserve the Buddhist religion and to further its prosperity. The way of doing this was by keeping cohorts of good soldiers to form an army, and by the accumulation of weapons, with the royal power at the head. Thereby he vanquished all his enemies in warfare, and he prevented the Buddhist religion from being endangered by the enemy, as kings have always done.

“ In Bangkok, of the soldiers who have fought in former wars, some are old and unfit and some are dead. Those *brāi hlvan* who are fit have changed their patrons, and the latter have not reported this transference. Some of them have tried to get hold of their old clients, while many cases are left unsettled until to-day. The lists have not been brought up to date, and so have not been correct for some time. Some of the clients have deserted and run away to hide in the jungle because the patrons overworked them, which they were unable to bear. Their patrons would not take any notice of their private affairs or happiness. Some ran away because they were afraid of punishment and some because they were afraid of their creditors. Some have run away because they were fined. They were afraid to return because they had done wrong, so they stayed on in the jungle for some time in spite of the discomfort. Some of these clients have gone to a governor and offered to work for him in return for protection and for his hiding the fact of their presence. In some cases a group of fourteen or fifteen persons have offered themselves as slaves to a prince of *kram* rank or a prince below *kram* rank or to officials, and have got documents to show they are under the protection of these important people. Then they have gone back to live



as a band of outlaws in some district, saying that they were under a powerful master in the capital whose letters they have, and so would not work for their old patrons. Some of them became more daring and committed thefts, stealing elephants and buffaloes, and hiding them in their lairs. The owners of these animals knew about it so the thieves passed on the animals further away, and that caused fighting and sometimes killing. This resulted in much trouble during the last reign.

“Now the present king has been enthroned only recently, and has made up his mind to protect the people and the religion from the danger of enemies both internal and external. And so he has given orders for a new registration to be carried out. Let the *Sāstī* settle all disputes about clients and hear cases left over from the last reign. Let the governors and officials give out orders to the district officers in order to make it known to those clients who have run away from their patrons, *brāi hlvan* who are still fit, slaves who were originally prisoners of war, debt slaves who are hiding in the forest, to come back to their old chiefs willingly. They will be pardoned this time. If the clients and (redeemable) slaves do not wish to be under their old patron but prefer to be under the governor and officials of some other town or other prince of or below *kram* rank, either of the King's or *Vāñ Nā's* family, or of other officials, they will be allowed to choose of their own free will on this first occasion, but afterwards they are to be under the new masters they have chosen. Provincial clients who have run away in bands must still remain in their provinces. There are not many of them left so they are not to be allowed to change their provinces or their patrons. Other patrons must not take them.

“If those clients who have run away still want to be under the protection of the jungle and refuse to come

back willingly to their patrons, in whatever district they are, let the governor and officials send a force to capture them and their children and imprison them all. Particulars of the numbers, names, patrons and villages of those who have come back willingly are to be sent to the *lūk khun sālā* (ministers' council) to be posted up. Not a single man may be concealed. From now onwards officials in Bangkok and the provinces, princes of or below *kram* rank, or any person who has enticed runaway clients to join them, are to stop doing so. But clients who wish to follow a certain patron are to be tattooed accordingly. If any people do not obey this edict, but still encourage the clients to hide in the forest as before, they will be punished in the same way as if they had committed treason.

“Orders have been issued for the tattooing of all the clients in Bangkok; and whenever the appointed officials (*kḥā hlvañ*) go to tattoo the clients in the provincial towns, let all governors and officials try to find those who are in hiding, that is to say all those who have no patrons, and tattoo them as provincial *brāi hlvañ*. As regards the clients who have patrons, but have not yet been tattooed, let the governors and officials capture them and inform the authorities in Bangkok so that those clients and patrons may be heavily punished, the clients being sent to cut grass for the royal elephants. Furthermore, it is commanded with regard to those provincial *brāi hlvañ* who have served faithfully and worked hard for many years, that now that His Majesty has come to the throne, he wishes to lower their period of service to one month in every four, releasing them to work for the other three months on their own. Those who do not obey every clause in this edict will be punished. Culaśākarāja, 1172 (A.D. 1810).”



CHAPTER VI

THE ARMY

We have already seen that when the Thai were advancing southwards they were necessarily organized for war, and this organization was on a basis of family relationship, every man serving with other able-bodied men of his tribe in a military band (*hmū*) under the command of a *cầu hmū*; while as settlements came to be established, the need for constant watchfulness still continuing, the men were organized under the feudal chiefs on whose fiefs they lived and who acted both as civil leaders (*nāy păn*), and military leaders (*nāy kôn dahār*),¹ owing allegiance to the lord of the country (*cầu mo'ân*). When warlike expeditions were contemplated, the *cầu mo'ân* ordered his vassals to collect their men to join his army. Every man brought his own weapons and food, and, if victory resulted, the loot was divided and the captives were enslaved (no doubt the origin of the institution of slavery amongst the Siamese). It was this fighting ardour, in those Thai who came within the bounds of the Khmer empire, that was made use of by their overlords; and so we see them depicted on the reliefs of Añkor Văt, labelled by the accompanying inscription: "These are the Syām Kuk." Eventually this same ardour was turned

¹ With subordinates, *nāy bân*, *nāy rōy*, *nāy sip*, heads of 1,000, 100, and 10 respectively. The Thai may have adopted the decimal system of army organization from other Mongol peoples with whom they came in contact at an early period. In this connection it may be mentioned that Yule remarks that "The decimal division of the army was already made by Chinghiz at an early period of his career, and was probably much older than his time." In fact we find the Myriarch and Chiliarch already in the Persian armies of Darius Hystaspes" (*Marco Polo*, 2nd Edn., Vol. i, p. 256).



against the Khmers when the Thai proclaimed their independence at Sukhodaya. Some of the *Maxims of Brah Rvan*, believed to date from the Sukhodaya period, preserve the warlike spirit of the times. Thus we have "In the presence of the enemy do not be remiss", "Keep weapons by thy side", and "Being free do not associate with slaves", which inculcated pride and honour. Loyalty and devotion to superiors are reflected in "Stand by thy princes until death", "Assist thy chiefs efficiently", and "Towards thy rulers do not mean harm".¹

We have also seen that in the Sukhodaya period and the first hundred years of the Ayudhyā period there was no distinction between civilians and soldiers, and that all the work was organized on military lines. In time of war the available man-power in any province was enrolled to form a provincial army, which acted as an independent unit, unless ordered to join forces with the royal army. The armies of the distant countries which Rāma Gānhēn was able to bring under his sway as tributaries were only called upon in times of great need, since they were more useful as barriers against foreign invasion.

The important features of King Paramatrailo-kanātha's reforms, so far as military organization was concerned, were of course the division of the population into civil and military divisions, with the consequent formation of a professional army, though men of both divisions still had to fight in time of war; and the changes in the nature of the feudal system and the power of the central administration. With the change of the feudal system to a personal basis and the scattering of the old territorially constituted feudal bands, as a result of the retainers being given the right to choose their

¹ JSS., vol. i, 1904.



patrons, the power of the feudal lords was weakened. On the other hand, the strength of the royal army was much increased by the expansion of the capital's direct sphere of control, since in time of war it was joined by all the men of the *vaṇ rājadhānī*. The princes who had been sent to govern the distant *brah̥yāmahānagara*, especially Bṣṇuloka and other component parts of the old Sukhodaya kingdom, became more inclined to rebel than they had been previously owing to their increased resources and distance from the king's authority. Although King Paramaṭrailokanātha divided the population into military and civil divisions, and did much to increase the strength of the royal army, it was left to his son, King Rāmādhipatī II, to introduce reforms in the art of war, and the method of conscription; while most of the specialized *krams* of the military division, or professional army, as set out in the *Law of the Military Hierarchy*, were probably constituted in this reign. The *Annals of Ayudhyā*¹ record these reforms by briefly stating that the king for the first time made (i.e. introduced?) the *tāmra bijaiya saṅgrāma* (a treatise on war), and also for the first time made a *sārapāñjī* (great catalogue) and carried out a *brah̥ rāja bidhī duk mo'anī* (general registration). As to the former it was evidently a treatise on the military art, but its exact nature is not known; for, although a work of this type survives, Prince Damrong is of opinion² that it was put together at a much later period.

With regard to the *sārapāñjī*, as already stated, Prince Damrong considers³ that prior to this reign the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom* had undertaken the work of registering and calling up the men of their respective

¹ *AA.*, vol. i, p. 13.

² Prince Damrong (1), p. 503.

³ Prince Damrong (3), p. 28.



divisions; but, this not being satisfactory, a special department, that of the *Surāsvatī*, was created to undertake this work for both divisions, and this made it the more easy to call up men from both divisions in time of war without delay. Officials of this department not only kept the catalogue and undertook the registration, but also urged the chiefs of the various *krams* to spare no pains in keeping up the strength of their departments. Presumably the *braḥ rāja bidhī duk mo'añ* refers to the carrying out of the registration on a large scale, accompanied by due ceremony, which was then for the first time introduced and thenceforward became a most important undertaking at the beginning of each reign. As we know from the *dāṁniap*, the office of *sāstī* held by an official of the *Kram Braḥ Surāsvatī* existed in every fourth-class province, with the duty of registering and calling up the *brāi* for military or civil work. On the other hand, the offices of *bala* (*kalāhom*) and *mahātdaiya* were found only in the *brahyāmahānagara* (later the first, second, and third-class provinces), because the men of the minor provinces were martialled by their local *sāstī* to join the army of the major province on which they were dependent, or the army of the capital as the case might be.

In King Rāmādhīpatī II's reign the men were probably also more carefully organized than they had been before in their various *krams*, which in the military sense may be regarded as legions, and which in the provinces seem still to have retained the old Thai term *kòñ*. Later, however, the *kòñ* had become a subdivision of the *kram*. Each *kram* was officered, as we have seen, by a *cāu-kram*, *palāt-kram*, and *samuhapāñjī*, each *kòñ* by a *nāy kòñ*, and this division in turn was divided into several *hmvat* or cohorts, each under a *nāy hmvat*, and the *hmvat* were each composed of several *hmū* or



maniples, each under the command of a *câu hnhũ*. Information is not available as to what number of men constituted the various divisions. The officers commanding the smaller divisions had the old Thai *yaśa* ranks *hmũ'n* and *băn*, originally the ranks of generals and meaning literally commanders of 10,000 and 1,000 respectively, but in fact commanders of smaller contingents. Beneath them were the petty officers *nāy rōy* and *nāy sip*, the latter according to La Loubère¹ being the title of him who mounts the elephant's crupper. It was the duty of these officers, on behalf of the patron to which all were attached, to know the whereabouts of the *brāi* attached to their *hmũ*, *hmvat*, or *kôn*, as the case might be, and to go amongst them when they were required for service. Since the basis of service was not territorial, the local officials such as *kāmnān* and *phũ hjai păn* were not in any way concerned in the work of mobilization. In peace time the men attached to *krams* of the *dahār* served in turn for a certain portion of the year, exactly as did the *balaro'an*, spending the rest of the year in agricultural work on their own behalf and that of their patrons. The time of service varied, as we have seen, at different times during the Ayudhyā period.

The men theoretically available for military service may be considered as belonging to four classes, the lay freemen, the monks, the foreigners resident in Siam, and the slaves. Of these classes, all lay freemen of whatever rank and family were liable to military service; and these included foreigners, mostly of Portuguese extraction, who were born in Siam and were regarded as being Siamese from the point of view of military service. Neither Buddhist monks nor Brahmans were expected to serve in the army, even in time of war,

¹ L. L., pp. 40 and 79.

unless it was known that men had intentionally taken the yellow robe with the object of avoiding government service, in which case instances are recorded of their being compelled to leave the Order. With regard to the foreigners, those who merely visited the country on trading visits might occasionally be asked to help with money or guns, but were never conscripted, while those who had settled in the country, either as employees of the foreign "factories" or as pure adventurers, might in some cases agree to join auxiliary corps, some of which will be hereinafter mentioned. The general rule seems to have been that neither Siamese nor foreign slaves (Burmese, Khmer, etc.) were regarded as sufficiently reliable or honourable to be soldiers, but they were conscripted as camp followers and labourers. However, according to articles 14 and 15 of the *Law of Slavery*, a man might send his slave to fight instead of himself and this slave was rewarded by reduction of the price of his freedom or by total enfranchisement.

It is now proposed to consider in some detail the characteristics and functions of the various *krams* of the military division of the people of the *van rājadhānī*, who originally formed the professional army of the capital; although as has been said above they only had to serve a portion of their time in turn, being set free for the rest of the year to cultivate their lands in the same way as were the freemen of the civil division. The *Law of the Military Hierarchy* supplies us with fairly full information as to the constitution of the military division of the eighteenth century, at which time the distinction between *dahār* and *balaro'an* had disappeared except in name, but which enables us to reconstruct the constitution of the professional army of the *van rājadhānī* while it retained its original form and was still under the command of the *Kalāhom*, that is until



the reign of King Bedarājā. The princely governors of the *brahyāmahānagara* maintained professional armies constituted on similar lines to that of the king; and these, though reduced in scale, retained the same form under the official governors in the seventeenth century, until the abolition of the distinction between *dahār* and *balaro'an*, as we know from the provincial *dāmnīap*. In time of war men of both divisions belonging to the fourth-class provinces of the *vaṇ rājadhānī* joined the king's army at the capital, while those dependent on a major province joined the army of that province, under the command of the governor.

The army in Ancient India was divided into four great departments (*cāturaṅga*)—the infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots; and Siam retains the same tradition with the exception that the last mentioned were replaced by artisans or, as we should say, engineers, for the terrain in Siam was unsuitable for the use of chariots. In the course of time, however, the original arrangement became much confused, perhaps as a result of the transfer of the elephants and cavalry to the civil division under other officers, and the change of function and splitting up of the original artisan *kram* into many small groups each under a commander of comparatively low rank. Thus we find in the *Law of the Military Hierarchy*¹ that the *brahyā rāma cāturaṅga*, or great *senāpatī* immediately responsible to the *Kalāhom*, were all commanders of the chief infantry *krams*. First come two generals, the main parts of whose *rājadinnāma* are *Tejo* and *Dāy Nām* respectively, both having *yaśa*, *brahyā*, and *śākti nā* 10,000. Owing to the duplication into *krams* of the left and right, there follow two generals, *Bijaiyasaṅgrāma* and *Rāmagāmhēn*, where there was originally only one, and in consequence of

¹ Bradley, i, p. 172.



this duplication their *yaśa* is reduced to *brah* and *śākti nā* to 5,000. In the same way, what was originally the fourth office of the *cāturāṅga* was later held by two generals, *Bijaiyaraṇariddhi* and *Vijīṭṇaraṅga*, of similarly reduced ranks. Thus the original constitution of the military division with four great departments each under a *senāpati* responsible to the *Kalāhom*, after which the four departments of the civil division were modelled by King Paramaṭrailokanātha, came to be almost entirely obscured.

The *rājadinṇāma* of the four generals above mentioned, with the exception of the *Dāy Nāṁ*, are merely Indian titles of the usual type, and give no indication as to the functions of the officer. In the case of the *Dāy Nāṁ*, however, we have a purely Siamese title, literally meaning "end of the water", and possibly indicating something in the nature of an admiral. Now nothing that could be called a *nāvy*, as we understand it, existed in Siam prior to the second half of the last century, when European ideas on the subject began to attract the attention of the Siamese. When it was found necessary to transport troops overseas for distant military expeditions, any available merchant ships or junks were commandeered; while the war-barges, which engaged in operations on the rivers or along the coasts, were manned by a crew of civilians and by soldiers as fighting men. There were no specialized Siamese naval units. It thus seems that the *Dāy Nāṁ* may have been the general whose particular function it was to command those soldiers who were commonly called to serve in the war barges. If we study the full *rājadinṇāma* of the *Dāy Nāṁ* and the *Tejo* as given in the *dāṁniap*, we can see that they are both nearly identical, and both include the word *Tejo*. In the case of the former, however, the Siamese words *Dāy Nāṁ*



have been inserted among the Indian honorifics, presumably as a generally understandable distinction between two officers which from the non-specialized character of the troops under their command had very much in common.

The Elephant Department, *Kram Braḥ Gajapāla*, remained one of very high importance after its transfer to the civil division, and was under the command of two *cānvāns* having the titles *Braḥ Bedarājā* (etc.) and *Braḥ Surindarājā* (etc.), each of *śākti nā* grade 5,000. Subsidiary *krams* were the rope department (in charge of the equipment for capturing wild elephants), the elephant physicians, the battalions of elephants-of-the-line, baggage elephants, and artillery elephants, and the tame animals used in capturing the wild ones. Attached to the Elephant Department was also the cavalry department, *Kram Braḥ Āśvarāja*, of which the *cāu-kram* had *śākti nā* grade 3,000, which indicates the relatively less importance in which this ancient department of the army was held by the Siamese. We know that King Cākrabarti placed great faith in elephants in war, and spent the few years prior to the first fall of Ayudhyā in catching as many as he could¹; while La Loubère mentions² that in King Nārāyaṇa's reign great importance was attached to the elephants, while only a small detachment of cavalry was maintained. Indeed, neither the Siamese, Laos, nor Khmers seem to have understood the use of cavalry in warfare.³ With regard to the reason for and period of the transfer of this *kram* to the civil division, despite the fact that its duties were entirely military, King Rāma V suggests⁴ that it was probably because wild elephants are found in the provinces of the North which were under the

¹ Wood, p. 114.

³ Leclère (1), p. 149.

² L. L., p. 91.

⁴ Rāma V (1), p. 45.



control of the *Mahātdaiya*. But this cannot be the correct explanation, since it was not until after A.D. 1691 that the northern provinces were placed under the *Mahātdaiya*, whereas we know from La Loubère that the transfer of the Elephant Department to the civil division took place a few decades prior to his embassy in the reign of King Prāsāda Dōñ. It was, in fact, probably brought about merely as a result of some palace intrigue, resulting in a favourite being rewarded with a coveted office, or a former holder of the office of Chief of the Elephant Department being visited with the king's displeasure, just as in a later reign some similar occurrence gave rise to the loss by the *Kalāhom* of all his dependent provinces. It was a Chief of the Elephant Department who was influential and powerful enough to seize the throne after the death of King Nārāyaṇa in 1688 and reign as King Bedarājā.

The *krams* of the military division may be considered as belonging to four categories which are, in the order they appear in the *Law of the Military Hierarchy*: (1) the foot guards (*Kram Aṣā*, etc.), denominated *dahār nā*, literally "front soldiers", so called because they normally served in the neighbourhood of the palace and royal capital; (2) various *krams* of household troops, serving within the palace, and, like the first mentioned, denominated *dahār nā*; (3) the foreign auxiliaries, designated "middle" since they did not serve near the palace, but, nevertheless, accompanied the king when he went on warlike expeditions, on which occasions their superior skill and bravery fitted them to serve as a bodyguard or protective ring round the king; (4) the artisans.¹

¹ The information, concerning the duties of the various *krams* of the four categories, which follows is largely derived from Rāma V (1), pp. 46 sqq.



The foot guards consisted in all of eight *krams*, and comprised the four *Kram Aṣū* and the Golden Lance and Shield Bearers (*Kram Khen Dòn*, *Kram Dvan Dòn*), two *krams* of each, commanded by the *mè dǎb* generals, or, in the case of the *Kram Dvan Dòn*, by inferior officers of 1,600 *śākti nā* grade. The men of these *krams* originally formed the picked Siamese troops that were used for the defence of the kingdom in case of invasion or internal revolt. They were probably seldom sent far from the capital; and perhaps were never sent outside the country, unless the king himself were in command of the expedition. They formerly appointed the customs officers (*nāy tǎn*) on the frontiers of the kingdoms, since, apart from matters concerning revenue, it was the duty of these officers to warn the generals if they received information concerning an impending invasion. After the changes in the administration that took place in King Bedarājā's reign, however, the generals only had power to establish watch houses on the outskirts of the capital for examining the passports of persons entering or leaving it. In peace time the main duty of these *krams* was guarding the routes traversed by royal processions; they did not actually take part in the procession except in progress by water, in which case a general (probably the *Dǎy Nǎm*) equipped one or two war-barges as an escort, according to the importance of the occasion. In later times soldiers from these *krams*, during their term of work, were also employed in rounding up the *br̥ai* for marking and registering. They also superintended the work of the *corvées*, and some of the officers judged certain classes of offenders. Service in these *krams*, despite the high honour that would seem to have attached to their status originally, was not popular because the troops were usually only employed in home defence, generally



under the eye of the king. They were thus deprived of most of those opportunities to obtain loot and captives that came the way of the troops of the civil division when invading the enemy's territory. With the loss of distinction between soldiers and civilians which followed the assumption of provincial administration by the *Kalāhom*, the condition of the *krams* of foot guards degenerated. They still seem to have remained more or less under the control of the *Kalāhom*, who, however, gave them unenviable tasks to perform; and by the middle of the nineteenth century their ranks seem to have become so depleted, and the perquisites of the officers were so diminished, that it was difficult to find men willing to accept the formerly high posts of *Tejo* and *Dāy Nām*.

The second category consisted of three *krams* of *Brah Tāmrvac Nā* (bodyguards), forming the inner, main, and outer guard respectively, the *Saṇam Dahār* (amazons), *Kram Balabān*, *Kram Danāy Lo'ak Hòk*, *Kram Rākṣā Brahaṅga* (bodyguards), *Kram Dahār Nai*, and *Kram Gū Cāk*. All these *krams* were duplicated into *krams* of the left and right, and were under the command of officers varying in rank from that of the *cāhvān* of the *Tāmrvac* with *śākti nā* 3,000 to the *cāu-kram* of the less important *krams* thereafter mentioned with *śākti nā* 1,600 or less. The first duty of the soldiers of all these *krams* was to guard the person of the king and to ensure his safety at all times, though the duty of the amazons was primarily that of guarding the harem. They remained within the palace enclosure when the king was in residence, and escorted him whenever he went out, either in a ceremonial procession or on a warlike expedition, a guard of amazons no doubt similarly accompanying any royal ladies he might care to take with him. Soldiers of these household *krams*



were the only ones that were allowed to bear arms in the palace; and their officers entered the royal presence on the occasion of an audience before those of any other *krams* of whatever rank, presumably as a precaution against treason. It was on account of the important nature of the duties of these *krams* that, although they belonged to the military division, they were not responsible to the *Kalāhom*; and the officers were appointed by the king, from whom alone they took commands. Besides their general duties as stated above, some of the *krams* of the household troops had more or less special functions of their own. Thus the *Tāmrvac Nā* attended the king when he tried legal cases in person or heard important appeals, and they carried out his instructions in connection therewith, such as those in respect to the infliction of punishments. The men who paddled the royal barges, work of high importance owing to its intimate connection with the king's personal safety, also belonged to the *Tāmrvac Nā*. Finally these *krams* were also charged with such ceremonial duties as supervising the erection of royal pavilions and cremation buildings. Their officers had power to order the necessary supplies from officials of the provinces of the *van rājadhānī*.¹ The origin of the term *tāmrvac* has been discussed in Chapter IV, where it was mentioned that two *krams* of *tāmrvac vāñ* were attached to the *Kram Vāñ*. They would appear to have been only comparatively minor bodies since their commanders had only *śākti nā* grade 800, and they would seem to have been detached at some period from the military division for service directly under the orders of the *Vāñ*.

The soldiers of the *Kram Danāy Lo'ak Hòk* were specially chosen for their skill as boxers, and it was their duty to march in royal processions near the king, and to

¹ *Brah̄ Dharmanūñ Law*, second part, art. 25.



seize madmen along the route or avert other minor dangers for which the use of lethal weapons was not necessary. On some occasions, however, they carried lances like the *Tāmrvac*. The *Kram Dahār Nai*, or inner soldiers, differed from the other *krams* of household troops in that they came more closely in contact with the king, guarding him at all times when actually in the inner palace or in residence at any other royal seat. They also had a good deal of civilian work such as looking after the royal gardens and animals within the palace, and included in their ranks master craftsmen such as the carpenters who made the rafts for the *Lòy Krahdòn* ceremony. Men of the *Kram Gũ Cāk* preceded the royal barge in two escort barges with the special duty of coming to its aid if it should be in danger of sinking. One other *kram* of household troops, the *Kram Lòm Braḥ Rājavān* (palace guards) was regarded as belonging to the civil division, and has been considered in Chapter IV. Its duties were entirely military and one can only suppose that for some reason it was at some period transferred from the military division as were the *tāmrvac vān*. Its superior standing is, however, indicated by the fact that it was commanded by a *cānvān* having *śākti nā* 5,000, equal to that of a *mè dāb* general of the second grade.

Of the foreign auxiliary troops the most important were the *krams* of Mōns, formerly commanded by *Cầu Brahyā Mahāyodha*, a *cānvān* with *śākti nā* grade 3,000 ; but this high office was abolished by the middle of the last century in order that these troops should be made more directly responsible to the *Kalāhom*, and perhaps made more amenable to discipline. Their work appears to have been similar to that of the Siamese guards (*Kram Aśā*) first described but, since their original country, Pegu, lay between Siam and the



Burmese capital, they were used particularly as spies when Siam was at war with Burma.¹ In the early Bangkok period they seem to have formed the bulk of the Siamese standing army, for military service by Môn refugees was made a condition of their receiving land and being allowed to settle in Siam. This was the more necessary since military service was loathed and despised by the Siamese of this period, and it was only possible to raise a larger army from them in the greatest national extremity. The gunners of Portuguese extraction (*Fa'ān Mèn Pū'n*) and the Chams (*Aṣā Cām*), who were used on expeditions by water because their original home was near the sea, were also commanded directly by the *Kalāhom*. The former were originally Portuguese adventurers, and we know that King Jaiyarājā formed in A.D. 1538 a bodyguard of 120 Portuguese soldiers who instructed the Siamese in musketry.² Probably it was also about this time that a select company of skilled Portuguese artillerymen was established; but, as already stated, the artillery was not generally separated from the infantry, and many of the infantry *krams*, such, for example, as the *Tāmrvac*, had a few cannon attached to them which were served by Siamese gunners. The art of founding cannon was probably introduced into Siam by Europeans in the sixteenth century, notwithstanding references in Siamese literature which appear to indicate that the use of fire-arms was known by the Siamese at a much earlier period. There appear to have been foreigners of other races employed on secret missions to the frontiers of the kingdom with the objects of getting news of the enemy's activities.³ It may also be mentioned here that another method of obtaining information concerning the enemy, that was employed by both Siamese

¹ M.T., p. 13.² Wood, p. 102.³ M.T., p. 13.



and Burmese, was to oblige an intelligent captive to dictate a detailed account, of the kind known to the Siamese as *gām hăi kăra* ("statement" or "evidence"), in which were set forth not only information concerning the strength and distribution of the enemy forces, but also matters concerning their history, administration, revenue, etc. Some of these accounts have survived and are of considerable historical value.

A Japanese bodyguard was instituted by King Ekādaśaraṭha, but we know that in 1632 all Japanese were either massacred or expelled from Ayudhyā by King Prāsāda Dòh, who regarded their presence with apprehension. In the *Law of the Military Hierarchy*, as we have it, a Japanese cohort (*Kram Āsū Yipūn*) still finds a place, but its small importance is indicated by the fact that its commander had only a *śākti nā* grade of 1,000. It appears that its members only did duty in connection with ceremonial occasions such as cremations, as also did those *krams* of still lower status, the conch blowers, the drummers, and the "cohort drilled on European lines", all of which, though probably consisting of Siamese conscripts, were numbered among the foreign auxiliaries.

The artisans (*Kram Cān Sip Hmū*) were, as King Rāma V suggests,¹ probably classified with the *dahār* because their work was originally military, corresponding in some measure to that of modern engineers; but by the seventeenth or eighteenth century their work had become entirely civil, and was dissociated from the command of the *Kalāhom* by reason of their being divided under the control of a number of minor chiefs, each separately responsible to the king. The originally military nature of the work of the artisans had no doubt been connected with the construction of fortifications

¹ Rāma V (1), p. 55.



and the manufacture of arms; but the peaceful state of the country during the hundred years prior to the fall of Ayudhyā, accompanied as it was with a growth of luxury and artistic appreciation, naturally encouraged the transformation of the military artisans into skilled craftsmen engaged in the construction and ornamentation of the palaces and temples of the capital. We find enumerated in the *Law of the Military Hierarchy* ten *krams* of craftsmen, most of them duplicated into *krams* of the left and right, which were as follows: the painters, the carvers, the sculptors, the turners, the founders, the potters, the moulders, the gilders, the coppersmiths, and the plasterers. These *krams* were each under a *cāu-kram*, whose *śākti nā* grade varied with the different *krams* from 800 down to 300. The comparatively low rank of the heads of these *krams* is an indication of the fact that craftsmen, musicians, and the like, though much sought after for service in the palace, were far from being invested with a high degree of honour or esteem. La Loubère¹ remarked that no one dared to distinguish himself in any art for fear of being forced to work, not merely for the six months legally owed to the government, but all his time and that without pay. "And because that they are indifferently employ'd in these Works, every one applies himself to know how to do a little of all, to avoid the Bastinados; but none would do too well, because that Servitude is the reward of Ingenuity. They neither know, nor desire to know how to do otherwise, than what they have always done. 'Tis no matter to them to have 500 Workmen, for several Months, upon what a few Europeans, well paid, would finish in a few days." Again, the term by which these *krams* of craftsmen were collectively known in Siamese, *Kram Cān Sip Hmū*,

¹ L. L., p. 69.



literally, "the ten *hmū* of the artisan *kram*," clearly indicates that these *krams* were originally only constituent *hmū* of one artisan *kram*, probably under the control of a *cāu-kram* or *cānvāñ* of fairly high rank. As a result of increasing elaboration in later times along the lines above indicated, these *hmū* graduated to the status of *krams* each placed under the control of a separate chief directly responsible to the king. This demand for skilled craftsmen was not, however, fully satisfied by, nor confined to, the metamorphosis of the military artisans; in course of time other *krams* of craftsmen also came into being which, as we have seen, were attached to such *balaro'an krams* as the *Vāñ* and the *Mahātdaiya*.

This tendency for companies of craftsmen and bodies of soldiers like the *Tāmrvac Vāñ* and *Kram Lôm Braḥ Rājavāñ* to be constituted in the *balaro'an* division was merely a manifestation of the more general tendency that we have noticed in other branches of the administration towards the loss of functional differentiation. So far as the military organization was concerned, it was carried a step further when in later times the various *krams* of the civil administration began each to keep a few troops which, since the distinction between *dahār* and *balaro'an* had been abolished and men were called up indiscriminately, might serve as a nucleus for an army in the event of war. It was difficult to get Siamese to serve as soldiers in these decadent times, unless compelled to do so in time of war, and they preferred to pay the money in lieu of such service, which, indeed, the government was very willing to receive. Hence these new *krams* were mainly constituted of Annamite or Lao captives or refugees, known as *Āṣā Yvañ* and *Āṣā Lāv* respectively. When they were formed of Siamese these were usually men who had been under



the protection of a powerful official or prince who had died, with the result that their status had fallen to that of ordinary *brāi hvan*; and being without a *kram* they were forced to serve as soldiers in what were merely termed *āsā hm̐ai*, "new legions," attached to some department of the civil administration.

Before the changes brought about by King Bedarājā in A.D. 1691, the Siamese forces were mobilized in time of war as follows: When hostilities broke out the king immediately called together the princes and ministers and appointed the various generals to serve under the supreme command of the *Kalāhom*, who was the official naturally suited for the post, though, in fact, the king might name whom he wished as generalissimo.¹ All available men, whether belonging to civil or military divisions, resident in the *van rājadhānī* were assembled by their officers to join the troops at the capital. The *Kalāhom* probably supplied arms and equipment and the *Nā* furnished provisions. It was customary then to form these forces into three armies which were the advance guard, under the command of the *Vān Nā*, the main or royal army, under the king's command, and the rear guard under the command of the *Vān Hlān*. All the best troops, that is to say, those of the military division, including the foreign auxiliaries, joined the main army where they were assembled round the king at the centre for his protection. In the same way the armies of the *Vān Nā* and *Vān Hlān* included personal bodyguards of these princes' picked retainers. The armies of the first, second, and third-class provinces were independently mobilized under their governors, and were either ordered by the *Kalāhom* to act on their own or to join the main army at the capital.² Van Vliet,³

¹ L. L., p. 89.

² Prince Damrong (3), p. 54.

³ JSS., vii, 1910, pt. i, p. 28.



referring to the time of King Prāsāda Dōṇ, was probably not far wrong when he estimated that although there were few soldiers in actual service, within two days from 60,000 to 80,000 could be raised ; while in time of war it was rare to mobilize more than 100,000 men, and usually only 20,000 to 60,000 were called upon to serve on a military expedition. There were more than 3,000 war elephants. According to the *Annals of Ayudhyā* armies of 100,000 men were several times employed by the warrior King Nareśvara. In 1581 a Siamese army of 150,000 men with 800 elephants and 1,800 horses invaded Cambodia.¹

In later times we know that it was the custom of the king, on the outbreak of war, to call together the princes, ministers, and high officials, from among whom he appointed generals to the command of the various armies, he himself probably taking command in person of the main army. Thereupon the generals and other officers immediately set about assembling the men attached to their own departments in accordance with the number required. It was usual for the *Mahātdaiya* to command an army comprising men drawn from the provinces under him in the northern part of the kingdom, each contingent being led by the governor of the particular province from which it was drawn. In the same way the *Kalāhom* commanded an army made up of troops drawn from the south, under their provincial governors. But if circumstances demanded it, troops from some of the *Kalāhom's* provinces might be sent to join another army or be divided between several armies. Thus some of them would be sent to join the king's army, consisting in the main of the household troops and soldiers levied in the neighbourhood of the capital ; or another minister, such as *Cāu Brahyā*

¹ Leclère (1), p. 152.



Yamarāja, might be given command of an army, consisting not only of the men of his own department, the police and prison attendants, but also some troops from the provinces. To take a concrete example, on the occasion of the expedition to Tavoy in A.D. 1787 the Siamese forces numbered, according to the records, about 23,000 men, divided into five armies. These were the first advanced army, under the *Mahāidaiya*, consisting of 5,000 men; the second advanced army, under the *Kalāhom*, of 3,000 men; the third advanced army, under the *Mo'an*, of 3,000 men; the royal main army, of 10,000 men, under the command of King Rāma I; and lastly the rearguard, under the command of the king's nephew, and consisting of between two and three thousand men.¹ These numbers were unusually small, partly on account of the depopulated condition of the country following the Burmese wars, and partly because a larger army of 60,000 men had just been despatched under the command of a prince to engage the main Burmese army in the north.

A full consideration of the Siamese art of war would be beyond the scope of this work, but some idea may be given of its general characteristics in relation to its bearing upon other social factors. The Thai had originally been a sufficiently warlike people, as is indicated by their early victories over the Khmers, which won them their independence and enabled them to expand at the expense of their weaker neighbours to the north and south. But though, as we have seen, they improved their methods of organization and imbibed some Indian ideas on the art of war from their contact with Khmer civilization in the years following the capture of Añkor Thom, this did not compensate them for the loss of the bold fighting spirit of the old

¹ M.T., p. 6.



Thai conquerors, which loss resulted from more than a century of comparative ease and security. So it was that the Siamese found themselves unable to withstand the rising power of the Burmese, when the latter happened to be under the leadership of a capable general; and in A.D. 1549 Ayudhyā only escaped capture by reason of the fact that the besieging Burmese army was compelled by privation to retire. King Cākṛabarti of Siam thereupon set to work to strengthen the defences of his kingdom, replacing the mud wall of Ayudhyā, which had stood since the foundation of the city in A.D. 1350, by a wall of brick, digging an exterior moat in addition to the one which already existed, and dismantling the defences of those frontier towns which it was difficult to hold and were likely to serve as bases for the enemy.¹ Nearly 140 years later La Loubère remarked² that before the French introduced their methods, the Siamese would not attempt to fortify outlying places for fear of losing them and not being able to take them again. King Cākṛabarti also sent out officials to improve the efficiency of the machinery of mobilization, and to enrol more men in the *vaṇ rājadhānī*. Men from this territory, who were supposed to join the main army at the capital, had wandered far afield in their search for a living, and could not be found when, in time of war, it was necessary to call them up for service. The matter was rectified by bringing three more provinces within the *vaṇ rājadhānī*, and thus increasing its area and population.³

These reforms unfortunately availed nothing, for Ayudhyā fell to the Burmese for the first time in A.D. 1569; and it required the genius of the hero king, Nareśvara, to retrieve the fortunes of Siam. Having declared the independence of his country in 1584, while

¹ Wood, p. 114.² L. L. p. 91.³ Prince Damrong (1), p. 539.



yet crown prince, during his reign of fifteen years (1590-1605) he not only achieved further brilliant victories, but also consolidated his gains, so that Siam was embarked upon an unprecedented era of prosperity and strength. He largely owed his military successes to the realization that the dashing tactics, that had served his Thai ancestors in the first flush of their early conquests against the decadent Khmers, would no longer serve, with such material as he had at his command, against the Burmese, and he consequently placed his reliance on tactics entirely new to the Siamese. These consisted of guerilla warfare, drawing on the enemy by feigned retreat, surprise, and the avoidance of unnecessary risks. But excellent though these methods were, when employed by a brave and skilful general, they lent themselves to abuse in the hands of incompetent leaders. This proved to be the case within a few years of Nareśvara's death, while ultimately, together with the growth of luxury, a false sense of security, and the introduction of a money payment in lieu of personal service, they led to the final destruction of Ayudhyā by the Burmese in A.D. 1767.

Generally speaking, warfare was undertaken in the dry season, when the passes and tracks were dry and the granaries full. Pitching camp, attacking an enemy's stronghold, and indeed all actions of importance, were only undertaken after consulting the astrologers who accompanied the army and were punished if things went wrong. The *Kram Nā* probably usually supplied a few days' rations for troops leaving the capital, but, after that was exhausted, armies had to live on the country through which they passed. Provincial governors were ordered to requisition rice, oxen, and buffaloes from every household, and, as the men had already been conscripted, convoys of women and



children bearing rice, dried fish, and fruit were shepherded by the provincial officials to the camps of the armies. Such forced requisitions, carried out methodically with the aid of the *Sāstī's* lists, were often more ruinous than the pillaging of enemy troops.¹ Though provincial governors were required to organize a temporary resistance in case of attack,² it was not the custom to attempt to defend the frontiers seriously, but to evacuate the threatened provinces and burn the houses, the army being assembled at perhaps a week's march from the frontier. In enemy country armies pillaged and destroyed all they came in contact with, and enslaved all whom they could make prisoners; but those who appropriated objects in the course of the warfare which should have been sent to the treasury were punished.³ There were few laws of war. The lives of envoys were usually respected, but such trickery as feigned surrender was considered proper. In war the lives of neither women, children, the aged nor infirm were spared, and great cruelty was practised on occasion.

The Law of Treason deals primarily with rebellion, and this serious crime against the state was visited with the most severe forms of punishment, various kinds of slow death with confiscation of property, the punishment often being extended to the whole family of the rebel. The crime of rebellion included actually betraying the king, attempting to poison or kill him or drive him from the country, introducing enemies or spies into the kingdom, and giving information to the enemy (arts. 1, 10, and 12); not denouncing a person who had committed or was going to commit any of the above crimes,

¹ Leclère (1), p. 151.

² *Law of Offences against the Government*, art. 95. *Law of Treason*, arts. 7 and 8.

³ *Law of Offences against the Government*, art. 70.



or writing, or knowing that someone else was about to write, a dangerous anonymous letter and not reporting it (arts. 2 and 3); and furnishing the enemy with food (art. 13). But persons who did their duty in reporting to the ministers or officials a plot to betray the king were rewarded and promoted to an office (art. 4), while even those guilty of rebellion might be pardoned if they had previously rendered great service to the state (art. 1).

The same law also deals with matters of more direct military interest: Thus, if a province was attacked, the local officials had to organize a resistance and do their best to expel an enemy, and if they were successful in this undertaking they were rewarded (art. 7); but if they did not organize such resistance they were punished by death, etc. Officials who did not march against the enemy, or hid, or went over to the enemy's side, were similarly punished (art. 14). The *Law of Treason* is also concerned with such matters as the punishment of deserters, of members of the elephant corps who failed to follow their leaders into battle and deserted, of those who did not guard the elephants and horses, sentries who slept on duty and were discovered by their superior officers, of those who stole munitions and equipment, the punishment in all these cases including death. But if punishments were severe for those who were remiss, rewards were truly princely for those who distinguished themselves on the field of battle. Officers were promoted to higher grades and rewarded with coveted insignia of rank, their families being thenceforth maintained at the royal expense, and even common soldiers were given official posts and insignia. Officials were also rewarded if in time of war they were successful in collecting revenues and transporting them to the royal treasuries.

La Loubère gives a valuable account of the condition of the Siamese army at a period when decadence was



already far advanced, that is to say towards the end of King Nārāyaṇa's reign, when the king, having but a few hundreds of Siamese soldiers regularly under arms, had, with results that are well known, allowed a French garrison to establish itself. In doing so no doubt he particularly welcomed the engineers who undertook the construction of really dependable fortifications, an art of which the Siamese themselves were almost entirely ignorant. The following are a few extracts from La Loubère's account :—

“As they have no Horses (for what is two thousand Horse at most, which 'tis reported that the King of Siam keeps?) their Armies consist only in Elephants, and in Infantry, naked and ill armed, after the mode of the Country. Their order of Battel and Encampment is thus. They range themselves in three lines, each of which is composed of three great square Battalions; and the King, or the General whom he names in his absence, stands in the middle Battalion, which he composes of the best Troops, for the security of his Person. Every particular Captain keeps himself also in the midst of the Battalion which he commands; and if the nine Battalions are too big, they are each divided into nine less, with the same symmetry as the whole body of the Army. The Army being thus ranged, every one of the nine Battalions has sixteen male Elephants in the rear. They call them Elephants of War; and each of these Elephants carries his particular standard, and is accompanied with two female Elephants; but as well females as males are mounted each with three armed Men; and besides this the Army has some Elephants with Baggage. . . . The Artillery, at the places where the River grows shallow, is carried on Waggons drawn by Buffalo's, or Oxen, for it has no carriage. It begins the Fight, and if it ends it not,



then they place themselves within reach to make use of the small shot, and Arrows, after the manner as I have explained, but they never fall on with vigour enough, nor defend themselves with constancy enough, to come to a close Fight. They break themselves and fly into Woods, but ordinarily they rally with the same facility, as they are broken; and if on some occasion, as in the last Conspiracy of the Macassars, it is absolutely necessary to stand firm, they can promise themselves to retain the Soldiers, only by placing some Officers behind, to kill those that shall fly. . . . They very much rely upon the Elephants in Combats, though this Animal for want of Bitt or Bridle, cannot be securely governed, and he frequently returns upon his own Masters when he is wounded. Moreover he so exceedingly dreads the Fire, that he is never almost accustomed thereunto. Yet they exercise them to carry, and to see fired from their back little pieces about three foot long, and about a pound of Ball. . . . As for Sieges they are wholly incapable thereof, for men that dare not set upon the Enemies when in view, will not vigorously attack a place never so little Fortified, but only by Treachery, in which they are very cunning, or by Famine, if the Besieged cannot have provision. They are yet more feeble by Sea than by Land.”¹

Referring to the same period, Gervaise has some pertinent remarks which throw further light on the condition of the army during its period of decadence :—

“At the present time there are not more than a hundred men of the regular army that serve voluntarily : the rest are recruited from the provinces and are forced to march and to serve, each at his own expense, in any place where the necessities of the State demand that he shall go. Each soldier carries on one shoulder his provisions

¹ L. L., pp. 91, 92.



and on the other his ammunition. The King supplies powder and shot, a musketoon to every four or five soldiers, and five or six pieces of cannon for the whole army. The helmets and shields of the soldiers are made of leather. Swords, *fouannes* (a kind of fork or harpoon for stinging the enemy with poison), quivers and arrows, they buy out of their own pocket, and they must provide themselves with anything else they need. There is, however, a number of carts and elephants laden with baggage and provisions; but only officers have the right to dispose of them according to the turn of events, and the various needs that arise. Every evening they hold a market in the camp, where they sell victuals to anyone who needs them, but they sell at so high a price that the poor, impecunious soldier takes only what is sufficient to keep him from dying of hunger. . . . When the army is in the field it never marches by night. They camp for the night, and if they perceive the enemy approaching, they entrench themselves in positions they think the most advantageous. The musketry does not cease fire until dawn, and by blood-curdling shouts and yells they do everything they can to frighten the enemy and make them lose heart. They never approach rashly nor without having first well consulted amongst themselves whether they be stronger in numbers than their opponents. Their maxim is: never fight except in extremities, but be content with taking prisoners and pillaging the countryside. They love the sight of blood so little that often, when they are ready for battle they are given the order from their general to fight well but not to kill anyone except when in danger of being themselves killed. It is considered that forty is a large number of men to be left on the ground after the hottest combat.”¹

¹ Gervaise, pp. 57, 58.



It would perhaps be unjust to take Gervaise's estimate of the courage and capacity of the Siamese too literally, for from his remark that the soldiers were "content with taking prisoners and pillaging the countryside" it is obvious that he was speaking of their conduct during the frequent marauding expeditions that made their way into Burmese territory during the dry season almost every year, rather than of their deportment in a serious engagement in which great issues were at stake.

Nevertheless the Siamese fighting qualities were poor enough by the end of the seventeenth century, and La Loubère rightly attributes¹ this decadence to four conditions: (1) The climatic conditions which are not conducive to vigour and energy, (2) the despotism of the government which compelled poorly equipped men with little interest in the cause to fight, (3) the Buddhist religion which particularly denounces the taking of life, and (4) a sense of false security induced by the strong natural fortifications of the country, high mountain ranges, impenetrable jungles, a terrain intersected by canals and subject to inundation during six months in every year; to which might be added an unjustifiable belief, despite repeated reverses, in their own unrivalled superiority and invincibility. Yet their neighbours were in no better condition and hence we find, in the course of a long succession of wars during the greater part of the Ayudhyā period, the honours of the day going to the side which happened at the time to have found a leader capable of temporarily stimulating the inert mass beneath his command, and inspiring it with a sense of national pride and will for achievement. Thus so far as Siam is concerned, we find the hero king Nareśvara rescuing his people from the Burmese

¹ L. L., pp. 90, 91.



yoke at the close of the sixteenth century ; while nearly two centuries later, after the final destruction of Ayudhyā, other national saviours appeared in the person of King Tāk, who drove the Burmese out of Siam, and his successor, King Rāma I, the founder of the present dynasty, who even carried the war into the enemy's country. One can only congratulate Siam on her good fortune in repeatedly producing, when all seemed lost, leaders who were able to rise to the occasion, and one must marvel at the amazing power of recuperation shown by the people.



CHAPTER VII

LEGISLATION ¹

It is well known that Siamese literature as a whole suffered very severely from the sack of Ayudhyā by the Burmese in A.D. 1767, and in the case of the legal literature a contemporaneous text ² affords definite evidence as to the extent of the catastrophe. We are there told that the legal literature extant at the beginning of the Bangkok period was only a ninth or tenth of that known to have existed prior to the fall of Ayudhyā. Nevertheless the corpus of ancient Siamese law texts as at present known to us forms no mean literature, and affords sufficient material for gaining a comprehensive understanding of Siamese legislative ideas.

This corpus dates only from A.D. 1805, in which year King Rāma I appointed a commission to carry out a revision of the legal manuscripts surviving from the Ayudhyā period. The General Preamble (*pān banèk*) which precedes all the manuscripts of the 1805 edition gives valuable information as to the circumstances which led up to the revision and the nature of the work which the commission was required to carry out. It came as a sequel to King Rāma I's successful revision of the *Tripitāka* fifteen years previously, but in undertaking his new task the king was actuated by somewhat different motives. It was no longer a case of comparison with original texts and indeed there would not have

¹ Apart from the law texts themselves and more particularly the General Preamble which precedes them, the sources from which I have derived much of the information in this chapter are the works of the two jurists, Dr. R. Lingat and M. J. Burnay (see Bibliography).

² *New (unclassified) Laws*, No. 28, of A.D. 1794, Bradley, ii, p. 462.



been the material for such work. One object, and we shall see later that there was also another, was the rectification of corrupt or contradictory passages which the king, not wishing to believe his predecessors capable of unfair decisions, regarded as being the alterations of criminal hands—the manipulations, perhaps, of corrupt judges. The General Preamble attributes the king's determination to revise the manuscripts to the discovery of a single unfair decision brought to light in the course of a very insignificant divorce case; but in fact it seems that the corruption of the texts had generally rendered the proper administration of justice impossible.

It is essential to understand exactly what were the nature and extent of the work of the commission because, since the original texts which formed their inspiration have disappeared, it is on the nature and extent of the work that must depend the degree of reliance we can place on the new manuscripts as the preservers of the ancient Siamese legal heritage. Fortunately the General Preamble makes it quite clear that the object of this traditionalist monarch was only to restore the legislation that had been in force in the Ayudhyā period and not to create any new legal code. The commission was instructed to make corrections of detail only, to consult the king on any matters of primary importance and, in addition, the final revision was to be left to the king. Unfortunately, however, we cannot always separate the alterations from the matrix considered authentic by the revisers, and thus we can only regard the texts resulting from the revision as strictly an expression of the legislation in force at the time. On the whole, however, they may be regarded as representative of the Siamese legislation of the Ayudhyā period, which indeed it was their object to restore.

The commission consisted of four royal scribes, three



Brahmans of the Supreme Court (*Lūk Khun Śāla Hlvāṇ*) and four royal pandits, and their labours lasted about eleven months. The new edition of the laws was written on "accordion-pleated" manuscripts and consisted of three identical sets, each comprising forty-one manuscripts, while each law-chapter (*lākṣaṇa*) occupy one or sometimes more than one manuscript. Of these three sets one was deposited, apparently in accordance with traditional usage, in the Royal Apartments for the king's use, one was placed in the Royal Library, and one was put at the disposal of the *Lūk Khun Śāla Hlvāṇ*. Each of these manuscripts, which were collectively known as the *chaḥpāp hlvāṇ* edition, bore three seals, the lion, elephant, and crystal lotus, signifying that the edition was to be regarded as authoritative throughout the provinces under the *Kalāhom*, *Mahātdaiya* and *Brah Glāṇ*, that is, throughout the entire realm. Of the 123 volumes forming the *chaḥpāp hlvāṇ* edition of 1805 all had, in spite of their importance, disappeared by the second half of last century, their place for practical purposes having been taken by the printed editions that had been founded on them.¹ Not until 1908 were any of the missing *chaḥpāp hlvāṇ* manuscripts recovered and seventy-nine volumes of this edition have now been safely housed in the National Library. Between 1805 and 1807 a fourth set of the manuscripts was made, known as the *rōṇ sōṇ* or secondary series, which, being intended for use only by copyists, was without the seals of authority. Only seventeen of these manuscripts are now known, but fortunately they include the laws on slavery and on compensation, which are not

¹ Nāy Mot, unauthorized edition of 1849, immediately confiscated; Bradley, twenty years later, frequently reprinted, etc. All these printed editions suffer from inaccuracies in printing and attempts to substitute more modern orthography which particularly affect their value to philologists.



represented among the *chaḥpāp hlvañ* preserved in the National Library.

In the corpus of 1805 the *lākṣaṇa* or law-chapters are arranged as follows and the same order is followed in the printed editions of Bradley except that he places *Mūlagatī Vivāda* after *Uddhara* :—

(1) *Brah̄ Dharmasātra* (1 vol.): *The Sacred Code of Manu*.

(2) *Indabhāṣa* (1 vol.): *The Words of Indra*.

(3) *Brah̄ Dharmanūñ* (1 vol.): *Law of the Constitution of Law Courts* (first part), and on *Official Seals* (second part).

(4) *Lākṣaṇa Vivāda* (1 vol.): *Law of Quarrels*.

(5) *Lākṣaṇa Rāp Fōñ* (1 vol.): *Law of the Reception of Complaints*.

(6) *Kramaśākti* (1 vol.): *Law of Compensation*.

(7) *Śākti Nā Balaro'an* (1 vol.): *Law of the Civil Hierarchy*.

(8) *Śākti Nā Dahār Hua Mo'an* (1 vol.): *Law of the Military and Provincial Hierarchies*.

(9) *Lākṣaṇa Kū Nī* (1 vol.): *Law of Loans and Interest*.

(10) *Lākṣaṇa Pua Mia* (2 vols.): *Law of Husband and Wife*.

(11) *Lākṣaṇa Cora* (2 vols.): *Law of Robbery*.

(12) *Lākṣaṇa Lāk Bhā* (and *Mūlagatī Vivāda*) (1 vol.): *Law of Abduction (and Law of Distribution of the People)*.

(13) *Lākṣaṇa Dāṣa* (1 vol.): *Law of Slavery*.

(14) *Lākṣaṇa Bet Srec* (1 vol.): *Diverse Laws*.

(15) *Lākṣaṇa Bayāna* (1 vol.): *Law of Evidence*.

(16) *Lākṣaṇa Maraṭaka* (1 vol.): *Law of Inheritance*.

(17) *Trahlākāra* (1 vol.): *Law of Judges*.

(18) *Uddhara* (1 vol.): *Law of Appeals*.

(19) *Kaṭa Sāmsiphak Khò* (1 vol.): *The Thirty-six Articles*.



- (20) *Brah Rājapāññāṭi* (1 vol.): *Laws*.
- (21) *Lākṣaṇa Bisuddhi* (1 vol.): *Law of Ordeals*.
- (22) *Kaṭa Maṇḍirapāla* (2 vols.): *Palatine Law*.
- (23) *Kaṭhmāy Brah Saṅgha* (2 vols.): *Buddhist Monastic Law*.
- (24) *Lākṣaṇa Āñā Hlvaṇ* and *Lākṣaṇa Āñā Raṣṭra* (2 vols.): *Law of Offences against the Government, and Law of Offences against the People*.
- (25) *Lākṣaṇa Khapatha Śū'k* (2 vols.): *Law of Treason*.
- (26) *Brah Rājakāmhnat Kāu* (5 vols.): *Old (unclassified) Laws*.
- (27) *Brah Rājakāmhnat Hmāi* (5 vols.): *New (unclassified) Laws*.

At the head of the list one is immediately struck by the word *Dharmasātra* and in beginning now to study the nature of the Siamese legislation we must give this law-chapter primary consideration on account of the importance of its relationship to most of the other *lākṣaṇas*. That the position of the *Dharmasātra* at the head of the list is not fortuitous we may rest assured for when, as we learn from the General Preamble, King Rāma I told the commission to begin at the *Dharmasātra*, one can assume that he was making no innovation in the order. Moreover a study of the law texts soon reveals that they are nearly all intimately connected with the *Dharmasātra* and through it with the legal system of Ancient India.¹

The Siamese *Dharmasātra* consists only of the story of the miraculous discovery of this sacred code and gives

¹ The relationship of the Siamese laws to the Hindu legal system was first pointed out by T. Masao in 1905, in a paper entitled "Researches into Indigenous Law of Siam as a Study of Comparative Jurisprudence" in *JSS*, ii, pt. i, pp. 14-18. He there remarks upon the presence of the eighteen law titles of the *Code of Manu* in the Siamese *Dharmasātra*, the seven classes of slaves, the classes of persons inadmissible as witnesses, and the recognition of the Hindu principle that interest ought never to exceed capital.



a list of Pāli headings, or principles on which justice is founded, which regulate the whole body of the law. Most of the other law-chapters are brought into relationship with the *Dharmasātra* by the repetition of the Pāli rubrics applying to the particular law-chapter. But some of the rubrics of the *Dharmasātra* are omitted and are replaced by other Pāli rubrics which suggest that the compilers have had access to *dharmasātras* other than the one included in the corpus. These alterations might have taken place at the time of the revision of 1805 or they might have taken place at the time of some previous revision, for there is reason to suppose that periodical revision was customary during the Ayudhyā period. The reason underlying these periodical revisions brings us to the very heart of the Siamese theory of legislation. We have seen that the *Dharmasātra* or sacred law forms a kind of inviolable skeleton to the whole corpus of Siamese laws just as it did in Burma. The function of the king, in the legal system to which the ancient Siamese law belongs, was not to legislate, but to protect his people and preserve the sacred law. But it was his function to declare the law as arbitrator of the differences of his people and in conformity with the *Dharmasātra*. In so doing he gave rise to a mass of legal literature consisting of his decisions and edicts founded on particular cases from which they are often only half disengaged. Thus we have the *rājasātra* as opposed to the *dharmasātra*, and in promulgating the former the king, though by the absolute nature of his power he could bend and even entirely contravert the *Dharmasātra* according to his will, could not hope to give his decisions the lasting force and authority of the sacred *Dharmasātra*, imposed as it was by a superior agency. They would be altered or repealed at will by his successor. Hence came about the periodical



revisions in each reign when the king sought by linking as closely as possible his edicts with the appropriate rubric of the *Dharmasātra* to ensure their continuity. And this was undoubtedly an object which King Rāma I had in view when ordering the revision of 1805 and which he was able to effect in the course of the final revision carried out by himself.

In the opinion of some authorities the Pāli *Dharmasātra* was introduced from Burma during the fifteen-year occupation of Siam by the Burmese in the sixteenth century. But apart from Pāli terms there are many indigenous Mōn words (e.g. *traḥlākāra*, judge) incorporated in Siamese legal language which appear to be too deeply embedded to have been introduced as late as the sixteenth century. We know that a Pāli *Dharmasātra* existed in Burma as early as the second half of the twelfth century A.D., and that the *Dharmasātra* was in fact introduced into Siam in the Sukhodaya period is now definitely proved by the recently discovered Siamese inscription dating from about 1344 A.D., in which both the words *dharmasātra* and *rājasātra* appear.

We may now turn to the consideration of the main mass of law texts. All those appearing in the list of *chaḥpāp hlvaṇi* above given must of course date from some time not later than 1805, but the texts numbered 2 to 18 are undoubtedly earlier than those which follow and, with the exception of *Indabhāṣa*, are all attached in the traditional way to the *Dharmasātra*, whereas of the others only the *Law of Offences against the Government* and *Law of Treason* are so attached. The *Palatine Law*, which dates from A.D. 1458, and the *Buddhist Monastic Law*, dating from the first reign of the Bangkok dynasty, are entirely differently conceived from the other laws. The *Thirty-six Articles* and *Old (unclassified) Laws* are

miscellaneous unclassified decisions and extracts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continued in the first reign previous to 1805 as *Laws and New (unclassified) Laws*. The other law texts belong to various periods of the four centuries during which Ayudhyā flourished and it would be useless to enter into a controversial subject further than is necessary for our present purpose. Dr. Lingat has discussed¹ the difficulties in the way of identifying the eras to which the dates mentioned in nearly all the preambles may be referred, and also the difficulty in accepting these dates when once the eras are identified, the "names" of the kings mentioned being merely long titles applied to many monarchs and of no use as an aid to identification. He seems to be of opinion that while we may often accept the dates given in the preambles as correctly applying to the dates of promulgation of the preambles and the first few clauses of the law which they introduce, the majority of the clauses in each law are the product of later legislation added at any time up to the close of the Ayudhyā period, and hence generally expressing the state of legislation in the eighteenth century. While accepting the accuracy of the last part of Dr. Lingat's conclusions, as stated in the Introduction to the present work, I am prepared to go considerably further and reject the dates given in the preambles of all those laws purporting to date from prior to King Paramatrailokanātha's reorganization of the administration and particularly those claiming to date from the fourteenth century. The latter include the *Law of the Reception of Complaints*, the *Law of Husband and Wife*, the *Law of Witnesses*, and the *Law of Offences against the Government*. My reason for rejecting these dates is founded on a close inspection of the preambles themselves, which

¹ Lingat (1), pp. 10-16.



in every case reveal the existence, at the time of promulgation, of a higher degree of administrative specialization, and of a well-developed official class, with indications that the separation of the people into civil and military divisions was already established, all of which we have abundant evidence to believe represent a stage in the organization of society that was not reached before the reign of King Paramatrailokanātha. This does not mean that these laws do not contain very ancient ideas, but I am unable to consider that the preambles or any of the clauses of the Siamese laws in the condition they have come down to us, antedate the fifteenth century, while they have probably all, as already stated, undergone frequent additions and revisions in the following centuries. On the other hand, there is less reason to suspect the correctness of the dates given in the preambles of those laws issued from the fifteenth century onwards, at least in so far as their original promulgation is concerned. The correctness of the dates of issue of those laws—the hierarchy laws of A.D. 1454—which are primarily devoted to the structure of the administrative system, are fortunately borne out by every indication, and are corroborated by definite statements in the *Annals of Ayudhyā* with regard to the reforms carried out by King Paramatrailokanātha; and the date A.D. 1458 may be safely accepted for that obviously early piece of legislation the *Palatine Law*. Those other laws of particular interest to us in connection with the present inquiry, the *Law of Offences against the Government*, the *Law of Treason*, and the *Law of Robbery*, are probably products of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (though containing ideas of much earlier origin), while the *Phra Dharmanūñ* law is obviously a later production, purporting to date from the middle of the seventeenth century, but (like most of the others,



indeed) bearing obvious marks of having been brought up to date in the following century.

Of the laws promulgated subsequently to 1805, those belonging to the last four years of the first reign of the present dynasty and those enacted between 1809 and 1851, with rare exceptions, appeared only in manuscript form. Among the exceptions was the anti-opium edict of the second reign, the first occasion on which printing was used to make known a government decree. The *Lākṣaṇa Cora Hā Sēn* (*Law of Arrest of Robbers*), a product of the third reign, was later incorporated in Bradley's printed edition of the corpus. The poor legislation of this period was followed, in the reign of King Rāma IV, by the issue, at intervals, of a large number of interesting edicts which have been printed in nine volumes between 1921 and 1926.

However unsatisfactory the preambles may be from the point of view of establishing the dates of the decisions to which they purport to refer, they are of the greatest interest as illustrating the manner in which Siamese kings of old, often at the request of some perplexed functionary or other petitioner, interpreted the law as the fathers of their people. The following are a few examples :—

“Salutation! In the year 1359, year of the Goat, the 11th day of the waxing moon of the month Āsādha, Monday, H.M. King Rāmādhīpatī, etc. (his titles), made his way to the throne hall called Puṣpakamālāmahāvai-jayanta Prāsāda and, turned towards the East, after having meditated on the sacred book of the *Dharma-sūtra*, issued the following commands. . . .”¹

“Salutation! In the year 1378, year of the Pig, the 5th day of the month of Māgha, Sunday, H.M. King Rāmādhīpatī, etc. (his titles), issued the following

¹ Bradley, i, p. 331.



edicts and ordered them to be brought to the notice of the princes, the members of the royal family, to the great military councillors and the high officials of every department at the capital Ayudhyā. . . .”¹

“Salutation! In the year 899, year of the Goat, the third day of the month of Phālguna, Thursday, H.M. King Rāmādhipatī, etc. (his titles), reigning in Ayudhyā, having come out of his private apartments to give audience to the officials of state in the throne hall Maṅgalābhīṣeka, decreed as follows. . . .”²

It was laid down in 1805 that the new *chaḥpāp hlvan* manuscripts were to be regarded as the only authoritative ones, even having preference over any authentic survivors from the Ayudhyā period that might in future come to light. This was probably the reason why perhaps no such manuscripts now survive, no value having been set upon them and hence no trouble having been taken to preserve them while, on the other hand, many Ayudhyā manuscripts dealing with other subjects are still extant. Thus we have very little evidence beyond what we can deduce from the 1805 edition as to the nature of the legal literature of the Ayudhyā period. La Loubère³ mentions the seventeenth-century public law (*sic*) as written in three volumes. But it is not clear as to exactly what texts he is referring, while Pallegoix,⁴ in apparently misunderstanding La Loubère whom he quotes, adds nothing to our understanding of the matter.⁵

Siamese epigraphy throws little light on the development of the ancient laws, and in the absence of a serious study of the Khmer inscriptions from the jurist's point of view this possibly valuable source is not yet at our

¹ Bradley, i, p. 347.

² Bradley, ii, p. 79.

³ L. L., p. 81.

⁴ *Royaume Thai ou Siam*, vol. i, p. 356.

⁵ For a discussion of the obscurities surrounding La Loubère's notice of the Siamese laws see Burnay, pp. 159-162.

disposal. There remain the modern Cambodian law texts which have been made available through the translations of Leclère.¹ Here we find several chapters to be almost identical with the Siamese laws, but though the comparison is often helpful and even aids in the reconstruction of Siamese legislation of the end of the Ayudhyā period, one can attach no great historical value to it since these Cambodian texts date from the period of the Siamese domination or even from that of the French protectorate. Here we have one more illustration of the fact that modern Cambodia has looked to Siam for the preservation of her ancient cultural heritage. It is true that both Mōns and Khmers occupied the territory now called Siam before the Thai achieved independence, and it was from them that the Thai received most of their Indian culture. But Dr. Lingat is of opinion that, from the facts that the Mōns professed the same religion as the Thai, that it is known that the latter received a Pāli *Dharmasātra* from Pegu, and that many of the Siamese legal terms are of Mōn origin, it is probable that this Indian legal influence reached Siam from the west. He considers that Mōn-Burmese law represents a stage between Hindu law and Siamese law, and that there is no doubt that Siamese law has not been derived directly from India, but by the medium of the Mōn-Burmese forms. At the same time the principles of Siamese law are clearly Hindu and they definitely attach it to that great legal system. While accepting these conclusions in so far as the influence of the *Dharmasātra* is concerned, our study of the development of the Siamese administration would lead us to believe that many of the more purely administrative laws and edicts are deeply impressed with early Khmer influences largely dating from about the time of the reorganization of the administrative system by King Paramatrailokanātha.

¹ Leclère (3).



CHAPTER VIII

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

King Rāma Gāmhēn's inscription affords us evidence of a patriarchal system of judicial administration having flourished during the earlier part of the Sukhodaya period, when the king was both the fountain of justice and supreme judge. It would appear that law suits were then so rare that the king could deal with them all in person, in *loco parentis*, and that there was no room for that corruption that later became only too characteristic of Siamese legal administration.

"If commoner, noble, or chief falls ill, dies and disappears, his ancestral home, his clothes, his elephants, his family, his rice granaries, his slaves, his family plantations of areca and betel are inherited in their entirety by his children. If commoners, nobles, or chiefs are in disagreement (the king) makes a thorough inquiry and then decides the affair for his subjects in accordance with equity; he does not connive at the thief or the receiver of stolen goods; if he sees the rice of another he does not covet it, and if he sees the riches of another he is not indignant. . . . In the entrance to the gate (of the palace) a bell is hung up; if a subject of the realm has any trouble or any matter that distresses him within or torments his heart, and which he wishes to declare to his prince, there is no difficulty; he has only to ring the bell that is suspended there. Whenever King Rāma Gāmhēn hears this appeal he questions (the plaintiff) concerning his case (and decides it) according to the right."¹

¹ Cœdès, i, pp. 44, 45.



The audience bell, the history of which I have discussed elsewhere,¹ persisted in Siam into the Ayudhyā period, and we know that King Rāma IV examined petitions every *vān brah* (Buddhist holy day), such petitions having first to be worded properly by a member of the *Kram Lōm Brah Rājavān*. The fact is that what amounts to a right of the subject of petitioning the monarch exists even at the present day, though opportunities for exercising that right must naturally be limited.

Justice continued to be administered by the king in much the same way until King Paramatrailokanātha's reign; and even after that the king remained, at least in theory, the fountain of justice and supreme judge, and his absolute power as "lord of lives" (*cāu jīvitra*) was even augmented with the increasing despotism and centralization of his rule. Justice was still administered under the surveillance of the Minister of the Palace by the Brahmans, and this minister to this day retains the title *dharmādhipatī* as a legacy of the time when all justice was dispensed from the palace. In practice, however, the administration of justice passed largely out of the king's hands. He still gave some attention to petitions, and appeals were in the last resort to him, if the parties could bear the expense, while judges were appointed directly or indirectly by him. In cases of doubt or difficulty judicial officials might approach him in audience, and his reply would take the form of those decrees with which we have seen the law texts are replete. But in the course of the Ayudhyā period a highly complicated judicial system was built up which is of great interest because of its originality, presenting, as it does, certain features quite unknown elsewhere. The growth of this organization was due in part to the

¹ *Siamese State Ceremonies*, p. 190.



failure of the patriarchal system to keep pace with the growth in numbers and litigiousness of the king's subjects, and in part to the introduction of Indian legal ideas. The change had probably begun to come about even during the latter part of the Sukhodaya period, since, as mentioned in the last chapter, we know from an inscription that a Pāli *dharmasātra* had already been introduced by about A.D. 1344, and the king probably appointed a Brahman to help him in the interpretation of the newly imported legal code. But the chief reforms followed the recruiting of Brahmans from Cambodia, after the capture of Ankor Thom, for these Brahmans were learned in the law of India; and they were then available to aid in administering justice in the larger extent of territory now directly ruled from the capital. Evidence that they themselves administered justice throughout its entire course, and did not merely act in an advisory capacity, is supplied by the existence down to the Bangkok period of two law courts—the *Śāla Bèṇ Kṣema* and the *Śāla Bèṇ Klāṇ*, nominally attached to the corps of Brahmans and placed in conjunction with them in the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy*, although by the Bangkok period they had fallen into line with the other courts by having been placed under Thai judges of the high *śākti nā* grade of 3,000. It may be that these two courts represent two of those in which, in King Paramatrailokanātha's reign, and for some time after, the Brahmans administered justice; and, when the administration of justice was split up among the various departments, the Brahmans retained these two courts to deal with light offences, which would not give them much trouble. The fact that the officials in charge of the *Śāla Bèṇ Kṣema* and *Śāla Bèṇ Klāṇ* appointed the judicial officials *bèṇ* and *subhamātrā* in the provinces ¹

¹ *Brah Dharmanūṭi Law*, second part, arts. 21 and 22.



is further evidence that these were formerly most important courts under the *Vāñ*.

Though King Paramatrailokanātha doubtless intended the administration of justice to remain centralized under the control of the Palace, it was probably split up among the various departments very soon after his reign or even during it. By this time the work of judicial administration must have grown too heavy to be undertaken by the Brahmans, and, besides, a very natural desire seems to have grown up among the people that being Thai they should be judged only by Thai officials. Thus it came about that the fully developed Siamese system of judicial administration had two remarkable features: (1) The splitting up of the administration of justice by its division among a number of departmental courts working independently. (2) The further separation of the administration of justice into advisory and executive capacities, the latter being undertaken by the Thai judges appointed to each departmental court who had power to administer justice only after the law applying to the case had been interpreted by the Brahmans, who acted in an advisory capacity. The need for the retention of the Brahmans in this capacity is, of course, explained by the fact that they remained the only persons having a sufficient understanding of the ancient law.

The Supreme Court of the Brahmans called the *Lūk Khun Śāla Hlvāñ*, which appears to have been constituted as an advisory body in the reign of King Paramatrailokanātha, consisted of twelve Brahman officials (who strangely enough, alone among officials retained the old Thai appellation *lūk khun*). They were both learned in the *dharmasātra* and cognizant of the royal decrees and decisions, to which end one of the three copies of the corpus of law texts was by tradition placed in their



care. The chiefs of these twelve Brahmans were the *Brah Mahā Rāja Grū Purohita* and the *Brah Mahā Rāja Grū Mahidhara*, each having a *śakti nā* grade of 10,000 equal to that of a *cāu brahyā*, which indicates the importance of their offices. Their functions as assessors (*phū bibākṣā*) will be described shortly in connection with procedure.

By combining information derived from the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy* and the *Brah Dharmanūñ Law*, it would appear that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the law courts of the capital were as follows :—

1. *Śāla Kraḥdrvañ Uddhara* or Court of Appeal, a royal court (*śāla hlvañ*), previously attached to the *Kram Vāñ*, which had passed under the control of the *Mahātdaiya*. It heard appeals from all departmental courts of the central administration.

2. *Śāla Kraḥdrvañ Āñā*, a royal court (*śāla hlvañ*) for criminal offences, previously under the *Kram Vāñ*, which had been transferred to the *Mahātdaiya*.

3. *Śāla Kraḥdrvañ Āñācākra*, a court concerned with disputed relationship, under the *Mahātdaiya*.

4. *Śāla Kraḥdrvañ Nagarapāla*, a court dealing with the most serious criminal cases, such as robbery and rebellion, and attached to the *Kram Mo'an*.

5. *Śāla Kram Vāñ*, a court attached to the Palace Department which judged all cases concerning the royal family, officials of departments connected with the palace service, and slaves of the royal temples.

- 6 and 7. *Śāla Bēñ Klāñ* and *Śāla Bēñ Kṣema*, courts dealing with minor offences, attached to the *Lūk Khun*, as explained above.

8. *Śāla Kraḥdrvañ Maraṭaka*, a court dealing with questions of inheritance, attached to the *Kram Lōm Brah Rājavāñ* (Palace Guards) apparently on account of the possible value of the estate in dispute.



9. *Śāla Kram Dā*, a court with several divisions, for judging foreigners of various nationalities according to their own customs. So far as the Europeans were concerned the germ of extra-territoriality had already appeared in the treaty with the Dutch, signed in 1664.¹

10. *Śāla Kraḥdrvaṇ Kram Nā*, a court for judging all cases connected with cattle, lands, boundary disputes, etc., attached to the *Kram Nā*.

11. *Śāla Glāṇ Mahāsampāṭi*, a court for dealing with cases connected with revenue and finance, attached to the *Glāṇ Mahāsampāṭi* (a treasury).

12. *Śāla Kraḥdrvaṇ Dharmakāra*, a court attached to the *Kram Dharmakāra* dealing with monks and novices, after they had first been expelled from the Order, having been accused of serious offences.

13. *Śāla Kraḥdrvaṇ Sāṣṭi*, a court dealing with all matters arising from the registration and conscription of the people for government service. It was attached to the *Kram Braḥ Surāsvati*.

14. *Śāla Kraḥdrvaṇ Bēdyā*, the medical court, dealing with all cases of suspected poisoning, and attached to the *Kram Bēdyā*.

Of these courts the first three seem to have been survivals of ancient royal courts which were attached to the Palace before Paramatrailokanātha's reign. There they were administered by the Brahmans under the supervision of the king, as we have seen was also the case with the two *śāla bēṇ*. By the Bangkok period they seem to have fallen more or less into disuse. On the other hand the departmental courts, or *śāla kāra kraḥdrvaṇ*, flourished and multiplied exceedingly. Of all the courts of this type the *Śāla Kraḥdrvaṇ Nagarapāla* stands out not only because of its importance but because it differed from the other courts in being a purely

¹ Wood, p. 195.



criminal court, and dealing with all the more serious crimes. This was contrary to the general rule, which was for the departmental court to deal with all cases coming within its sphere whether civil or criminal, for, generally speaking, the Siamese, like other Asiatics, made no distinction between civil and criminal law and procedure. Purely civil cases, in which the question of punishment did not arise, were, however, seldom brought. To attempt to follow the multiplication of departmental courts, which had brought chaos into Siamese administration of justice long before the whole system was swept away in 1893, would be a useless if not impossible task. It will be enough to note the tendency which characterized the evolution of the courts attached to the more important ministries. This was a tendency to change their function in accordance with the changes which overtook the *krams* to which they were attached. Thus, instead of one appeal court several appeal courts were established in conjunction with the various departments. When the administration of the provinces came under the control of the *Mahātdaiya*, *Kalāhom*, and *Glān*, courts were established in connection with these ministries to hear appeals from the provinces. When control of the revenues came to be divided amongst many departments, finance courts were established in connection with the various treasuries.

In the *Law of Judges* ¹ the persons who were qualified to act as judges (*trahlākāra*) are set out as follows :—

- (1) Those who are of the same religion or country as one of the parties.
- (2) Those who hold office as *nāy rōy* or *nāy khvèn* in the outer provinces.
- (3) Those who are impartial and do not side with one of the parties.

¹ Bradley, i, p. 454.

(4) Judges appointed as substitutes for the great judges.

(5) Judges appointed by the king.

(6) Arbitrators chosen by both parties of a common accord.

Some of the qualifications appear to be very ancient, but in the fully developed Siamese judicial system, all the judges of the law courts were appointed directly or indirectly by the king as chief judge.¹ But in civil cases the doorway to arbitration as mentioned under No. 6 remained open, and was largely taken advantage of by the people, to whom the cost of legal proceedings would often otherwise have been prohibitive. The titles of the judges of the courts of the capital appear in the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy*, with *śākti nā* grade ranging from 400 to 1,000 according to the importance of the office. The jurisdiction of the ordinary departmental courts extended only over cases occurring in the capital and in the *vañ rājadhānī*.

Courts and judges in the provinces were constituted on the same lines as those in the capital. Each official held his own court to decide cases appertaining to his department, while the *cāu mo'an* and *kramakāra* (of which the *bèñ* had the special duty of reading out the appropriate article of the law) collectively formed a tribunal to function in place of the *Lūk Khun*, the latter being too far away for it to be easy to consult them. After they had considered the case they sent it to be tried by the court of the appropriate official. The *yakkrahpātra*, appointed to each province by the *Kram Vāñ*, acted as a check over the *cāu mo'an* and *kramakāra* and reported independently to the king. Serious criminal

¹ Arts. 28, 32, and 97 of the *Law of Offences against the Government* are concerned with the punishment of officials, who are not judges, arresting and punishing alleged offenders without trial.



cases were sent from the minor provinces to the chief provinces on which they were dependent, and when decided were sent back to the particular minor province for the imposition of fines or other punishments on the wrongdoer.¹

Some information concerning Siamese Law Court procedure has been given by La Loubère² and others, but their accounts are somewhat confused and only partially correct, as is not unnatural in view of the unusual and somewhat complicated nature of the subject. The following brief account is based mainly on that of Prince Damrong who sets forth clearly³ the main principles of procedure which were the same in every court in both civil and criminal cases :—

If a person wished to bring a lawsuit he did not write out the accusation himself, but he applied to one of a class of officials known as *cā śāla* saying that he wished to bring such and such a suit. If he was an ordinary freeman his patron made the application on his behalf. The *cā śāla* wrote down the accusation and delivered the document to the *Lūk Khun Śāla Hlvan* (or the *kramakāra* in the provinces) for their consideration as to whether it was a legitimate case for trial. If the *Lūk Khun* considered that the case merited trial it was laid before a committee to determine which departmental court should try it. The written accusation was then sent to that court, where the judge examined the accused. He recorded the latter's statement and sent it to the *Lūk Khun*, who examined it with a view to ascertaining (1) that part of it that was in agreement with the statement of the plaintiff, and (2) that part of it that was in disagreement and would require further elucidation with the aid of witnesses, etc. The judge

¹ Prince Damrong (5), p. 55.

² Prince Damrong (5), p. 54.

³ L. L., p. 86.



then carried out the examination of the witnesses and sent his report to the *Lūk Khun*, who indicated the extent of the wrongdoing in relation to the section of the law applicable to that particular class of offence. The judge submitted the findings of the *Lūk Khun* to an official called the *phū prāp*, or punisher, who decided on a punishment suitable to the case, and this punishment was then enforced by the judge.

If a party to a suit was not satisfied with the trial he could appeal to the appropriate court, but if his petition was unjustified he was liable to punishment. This and the expense prevented frequent appeals. In the provinces,¹ if a person wished to appeal against the judges, the appeal was heard by the *cāu mo'an* and *kramakāra*. If he appealed against the *kramakāra* in their capacity of *lūk khun* (*phū bibākṣā*) the case was heard by the *cāu mo'an* and those members of the *kramakāra* who did not sign the judgment. If the appeal was against the *cāu mo'an* it went to the superior province on which the particular province was dependent, and if it was not settled there, to the appeal court under the department of the central administration that controlled the province in question. This had taken the place of the central *Śāla Uddhara* formerly attached to the Ministry of the Palace, and where the king and Brahmans used to hear appeals both from the capital and the provinces. But serious criminal cases went to the *Nagarapāla*, not the court of the ministry on which the province was dependent. In cases where the death penalty was to be inflicted, whether on provincial criminals or provincial officials, the case had further to go before the *Śāla Uddhara* of the *Mahātdaiya* (in whatever province the case originated), and the death warrant was stamped, not only with the seal of the

¹ Rāma V (1), p. 21.



ministry on which the province was dependent, but also with a special and superior seal of the *Śāla Uddhara Mahātdaiya* called the *cākra*.¹ Appeals could be lodged, it should be added, not against the decision of the court, but against the sentence and the judges' corrupt practices.

It is impossible to enter deeply here into the details of the complex system of Siamese legal procedure. The law chapters on judges (in which every effort is made to guard against their malpractices), reception of plaints, appeals, witnesses, and ordeals are full of the most minute regulations, a detailed study of which might well fill several volumes and occupy the attention of jurists for many years. I shall confine myself to amplifying the account already given by noticing a few of the more striking characteristics of the system.

With regard to the malpractices of judges, the following example will serve to give a fairly comprehensive idea of the sort of legislation it was found necessary to impose: "The judge who, having received a plaint, lets the matter drag on; who does not judge according to the law; who draws up a false plaint for one of the parties; who condemns one party for the benefit of the party who has made him presents; who aloud decides in favour of a party that he has decided to condemn, because he has received presents from the other party; who claims more judicial fees than the law allows; who does not follow the law; who makes one of the parties work for him; who, having received a plaint from a woman, tries to seduce her; or who demands money from one of the parties so that he may win his suit, is liable to one of six penalties."²

The expenses attached to lawsuits were very great.

¹ *Brah̄ Dharmanūñ Law*, first part, art. 1.

² *Law of Offences against the Government*, art. 33.



This was mainly due to the fact that neither the judges nor other law officers were paid for their services, but had to obtain their livelihood by levying innumerable fees on the parties to defray the cost of their services. This was quite apart from the fines, which were a source of royal revenue after a certain proportion had been deducted by the judges.¹ Naturally this system encouraged corruption, although it was strongly condemned in the laws, and, since every official from the judges downwards had his price, the decision went in favour of the party able to command most means. La Loubère² gives an account of the charges of justice, translated from the Siamese, which show that charges were made for every conceivable action on the part of the officials, including the reading of the petition by the governor and *kramakāra* or *Lūk Khun*, as the case might be, for summoning the parties to the hall of justice, and for copying their depositions. These fees were payable to the officers concerned in each particular duty, while other fees were payable to the judges for hearing a case and to the *phū bibākṣū* for consulting the law if that were deemed necessary; and there were also the costs of certain offerings to the deities. These charges were borne equally by both parties. The following extract from the *Law of Ordeals*³ will serve as a further and more definite illustration of the diversity of the expenses of justice and of their extent, although these numerous but seemingly moderate charges were, of course, swelled by the necessary bribes.

For the clerk reading the statement of the case	3 ticals
For the Recorder reading the invocation and pledge	3 „
Cost of diving-poles	3 „
Sitting fee for judges	6 „

¹ In the provinces 10 per cent in addition went to the governor.
L. L., p. 83.

² L. L., p. 163.

³ Gerini, *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, July, 1895, p. 169.



Cost of bamboo collars worn by plaintiff and defendant	1 tical
Fee to four constables	3 ticals
Fee for harrowing and smoothing over the ground on the river bank	5 "
Gong-beating fee	1 tical
Fee for pressing down under water the necks of the contenders	1 "

These charges make a total of 26 ticals, to which must be added sundry charges for the cost of offerings to the tutelary deities, white dresses to be worn by the contenders, and certain sacrificial implements, totalling 11 ticals, thus making a grand total for the water ordeal of 37 ticals.

While a case was in progress both parties were kept near the court under strict supervision. Except in criminal cases, bail was allowed and had to be paid by both plaintiff and defendant. In criminal cases the accused, while awaiting trial, could obtain relief from the inconveniences attaching to his position on the following scale: exemption from leg-irons, 4 ticals; from body chains, 4 ticals; from iron neck-collar, 4 ticals; registrar's fee, $1\frac{1}{2}$ ticals.

In spite of the considerable amount of revenue derived by the government and officials from lawsuits, parties were always free to compromise and this seems to have been encouraged. The laws attempted to guard against the delays which were really inseparable from such a complicated and unwieldy system of judicial administration, and one of the royal customs at the beginning of a new reign was to settle all outstanding lawsuits as quickly as possible, and not to collect costs from the people engaged in the cases.¹ Advocates employed by either party must be within the thirty-two degrees of kin of the party for whom they were acting. Either party found wearing an amulet forfeited his suit, and magicians were not heard in court as accusers of those

¹ Prince Damrong (2), p. 41.



who complained against them. A defendant was not allowed to make a counter-complaint against the plaintiff until after the original case had been tried, when his complaint would receive attention. Contempt of court was punished by fining.

If necessary, three methods of arriving at the truth were employed in the Siamese law courts, and these methods were well known in Ancient India. They were the examination of witnesses, the ordeal, and the oath. According to the Siamese *Law of Witnesses*, thirty-three classes of persons (the familiar list including fishermen, gamblers, shoemakers, prostitutes, etc.) could not be witnesses, as against twenty-nine in *Manu* and about 107 in *Nārada*. A Buddhist monk could only be brought into a secular court of law as a witness. If he had committed a serious crime he could only be tried by the court of the *Kram Dharmakāra*, after he had first been unfrocked.

In certain circumstances recourse was had to ordeals, though this method of trial was not revived after the fall of Ayudhyā. According to the Siamese *Law of Ordeals* the conditions which called for this method of trial were one or other of the following :—

(1) When the parties in a cause did not agree as to their statements and challenged each other to an ordeal, this was to be allowed. (2) When the evidence of accuser, accused, and their respective witnesses was conflicting or insufficient to establish the case, both accuser and accused were to purify themselves of suspicion by ordeal in each other's presence. (3) When both parties were unable to produce witnesses, both were to be subjected to an ordeal, should the importance of the case demand it. Siamese law was more equitable than Indian law¹ in that not only the defendant was

¹ *Nārada V*, 102, 104, and 105.



required to undergo the ordeal, but both litigants, thus preventing the frequent bringing of false charges. Witnesses also might be subjected to the ordeal where their evidence was open to suspicion or where, by the consent of both parties, a witness belonging to one of the prohibited classes had been admitted, no properly qualified witnesses being available. The ordeals practised in Siam included those by water, fire, candle, melted lead, poison, chewing rice, etc. A careful study of them, together with a translation of the Siamese *Law of Ordeals* and the imprecations read in connection with them, has been published by the late Colonel Gerini, to which the reader desiring fuller information is referred.¹

The third method of arriving at the truth employed in old Siamese law courts was the oath, which, as everywhere understood by Oriental lawgivers, was rather an imprecation or adjuration than a solemn affirmation of truth. It thus resembled the imprecation read in connection with the ordeals, and is, in fact, classed with them in the Siamese *Law of Ordeals*. As the version given in many books on Siam is defective, it may be as well to refer the reader to the careful translation of the original contained in the *Law of Witnesses* given by Gerini in the work just cited.

An interesting instrument of justice of extremely ancient origin was derived from the old system of compensation or wergild, which is the subject of the *Law of Compensation*.² In the first part of this *lākṣaṇa* the value of the lowest class of human beings, that is the slaves, is laid down as follows. A male child up to three months of age was worth 6 ticals, and with his age his value increased until a man attained his full

¹ *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, April and July, 1895.

² Bradley, i, pp. 95 sqq.



value, 56 ticals, between the years 26 and 40. From the age of 41 his value decreased little by little until from 91 to 100 it was only 4 ticals. In the case of a woman, the value began at 4 ticals, rose to 48 ticals between 21 and 30, decreasing to 3 ticals between 91 and 100. These were the sums to be paid in compensation to the owner by the person who caused the death of a slave whether accidentally or otherwise. For an injured eye the amount was one-sixth of the value of the body; for a wound on the hand and foot of one side, one-fourth; if both hands and eyes were damaged, one-third; for both feet, one-half. If a disease was caused that could be cured, the amount was one-fifth; for a more serious and incurable disease, one-half; the same amount if stupidity or madness ensued. In the second part of the same law, the amount of compensation to be paid in the event of a person causing the death of a freeman or official is formulated from the lowest freeman having a *śākti nā* grade of 5 *rai*, in which case the weregild is fixed at half as much again as the weregild payable for causing the death of a slave of the same age, up to a high official of 10,000 *śākti nā* grade, for whom fifty-eight times the weregild payable for a slave of the same age must be paid. The princes, the *uparāja*, and the king (though all but the last mentioned had *śākti nā* grade) are not included in the list, their value presumably being above computation. The amount of weregild quoted in all the above cases is on the assumption that death was caused by the empty hands of the slayer. If wood was used the sum was half as much again; if iron, twice as much as with hands alone, the easiest methods of killing being thus discouraged by a heavier penalty.

In addition to the amount of weregild to be paid in compensation for causing the death of freemen or



officials, the amount due to persons of every grade of *śākti nā* for an injury is detailed in the *Law of Compensation*, the amount being also carefully graduated according to the extent and type of injury, and being subject to the same proportionate increase in the case of use of wood or iron implements as when death was caused. This arrangement was subject to an important modification, already mentioned in an earlier chapter, which acted as a check on oppression of the people by the officials. If a person wronged someone of the same *śākti nā* grade as his own or of a higher grade, he paid according to the grade of the party injured; but if an official wronged or killed a person of lower *śākti nā* grade than his own, he paid according to his own grade, not that of the person suffering the injury. This important check is probably of later origin than the system on to which it appears to have been grafted. The *śākti nā* system was also utilized in the courts of law as a means of assessing the amount of fines to be paid for offences under other laws, a person of higher grade (and, incidentally, more wealth) paying a bigger fine than was paid by one of a lower grade for the same offence, a system which would naturally appeal both to a government and to judges who found the fines a profitable source of income. Persons of a *śākti nā* grade over 400, however, had the advantage of being able to send a substitute to represent them during the hearing of their case.

Punishments included fines, imprisonment, flogging, the wearing of the cangue collar, being gonged round the town, or (the most degrading punishment of all) being sent to cut grass for the royal elephants, mutilation and death in various forms, and confiscation of property. In general the punishment bore some relation to the crime. Thus persons stealing from the



treasury were punished by molten silver being poured down their throats. But such elaborate forms of execution were reserved for the worst criminals, and the details of such punishments are especially to be found in the *Law of Treason*, the *Law of Offences against the Government*, and the *Law of Robbers*. The same punishments exactly were prescribed in Cambodia, and the laws describing them have been translated by Leclère,¹ to whose work the reader is referred for all the gruesome details. Only in cases of rebellion and treason did the punishment fall not only on the actual criminal, but also on his family. This, as in China, was perhaps originally necessitated by the strength of the family bond. There is a Siamese proverb which says, "When cutting down rattans don't leave the sprouts" (i.e. When killing the father do not spare the offspring), and this old maxim was quoted to King Rāma I at the time of the execution of King Tāk, in support of the political expediency of doing away with Tāk's sons lest they might give trouble later on. But this practical advice was not followed in those late and comparatively enlightened times, and the result was that each rebelled in due course, and had to be executed nevertheless.² But, partly as a result of the influence of Buddhism, the Siamese were always averse to taking life, and sentence of death could only be passed by the king or some high officer to whom the king had expressly delegated that power. He was usually a special commissioner sent by the king into the provinces, whether to judge a particular case or to deal with all cases worthy of death.³ This commissioner might also be armed with authority to depose and punish any of the local officers found worthy of such treatment, but rarely without

¹ Leclère (3).

² L. L., p. 87.

³ Gerini, *JSS.*, vol. i, 1904, p. 14.



acting in consultation with the governor.¹ Occasionally, however, he was even given power to try a governor, and Gervaise mentions that a governor of Bishpuloka was thus tried and executed.² On the whole, therefore, punishments were, except in the worst cases, probably less severely administered than in many Oriental countries, often taking the paternal form of a summary infliction of the bastinado, after which the offender was restored to his former position without any stigma remaining. Persons of wealth could always mitigate their treatment in prison by judicious bribery, while a scale of payments in lieu of certain punishments is mentioned in the *Law of Compensation*.

The prisons were dirty and pestilential buildings, and the barest necessities in the way of food and clothing were provided by the government for the prisoners, who were driven out each day to public works. Those prisoners having rich relations were brought better food from outside. The prison for light offences was called *dim*, for more serious offences *taḥ rān*, and for treason *guk*, the latter being under the supervision of the *Nagarapāla* at the capital. At the beginning of a new reign, deserving prisoners were released.

The system of apprehending wrongdoers and bringing them to justice was primitive, and compatible with an early feudal organization, in which these duties devolved on the people as a whole. In the first place the patron was held responsible for the production of his client,³ and if he sheltered him from arrest he was liable to severe punishment. In the second place the onus of bringing a criminal to justice was laid on all the people

¹ Ibid., loc. cit.

² Gervaise, p. 86.

³ *Law of Robbers*, art. 4, and *Law of Offences against the Government*, arts. 39, 81, 86.



living within three *sēn* fifteen *vā* (150 yards) of where the crime was committed who, under the leadership of the local officials, were obliged to go out and capture the criminal. In the third reign a supplementary law known as the *Lākṣaṇa Cora Hā Sēn*, as its title implies, made those living within five *sēn* of the place where the crime was committed, take up the search, since in places where the population was small the old law did not require enough men to engage in the pursuit. If they were successful the person who captured a robber was rewarded with a third of the money stolen, the remainder being refunded to the victim ; but if they failed to capture him they were punished by a fine called *rāṇvāt*, which was assessed according to their *śākti nā* grade, and was, in fact, a compensation paid in accordance with the *Law of Compensation*, which shows the nature of their responsibility. The fine was inflicted not only upon the persons living within the radius of five *sēn* and on the local officials, but also on the victim of the robbery for lack of care. This system was reinforced by spying, every person being expected to act as informer against his neighbour, and heavy punishment was the lot of those who failed to report to the authorities if they knew of any persons who were plotting to steal or pillage.¹ Anything in the nature of an organized police force existed only in the capital, and perhaps in some of the provincial towns. This force in the capital consisted of the *trahvera*, or corps of lictors, which was attached to the *Kram Nagarapāla*, and acted in some sense, as police, law court constables, gaolers, and watchmen who gave the alarm in case of the outbreak of fire.

¹ *Law of Offences against the Government*, arts. 50, 83.



CHAPTER IX

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

As in most Oriental countries, one of the chief concerns of the government was the collection of revenue, most of which was derived from taxation and fines, though at certain periods the proceeds from royal trading ventures and the sale of the products of Crown lands seem to have been considerable. For the Sukhodaya period we have little direct information beyond the following statement in King Rāma Gāmhèn's inscription, which concerns taxation and commerce. "The lord of the country levies no duty on his subjects, who, all along the road go in company, leading oxen to market, riding horses to be sold. Whoever wishes to trade in elephants, does so; whoever wishes to trade in horses, does so; whoever wishes to trade in silver or gold, does so."¹ The word "duty" in the first sentence (i.e. *taxe* in M. Coedès' original French translation) refers to *ckòp*, an early form of *cāṅkòp*, which had, throughout the Ayudhyā and early Bangkok periods, the special meaning of "customs and inland transit duties". The context in which this sentence appears in the inscription makes it quite clear that the early form of the word had the same meaning. Since this is an extremely ancient form of tax and was evidently known in the Sukhodaya period by reason of its very mention, we must suppose that it was suspended by Rāma Gāmhèn, and that this king was a strong believer in the principle of free trade. We know nothing definitely as to other sources of revenue in the Sukhodaya period,

¹ Coedès, i, p. 44.

but probably a large proportion of it was in kind, paid either as taxes or as fines; while tribute from the recently subdued dependent states, which became insignificant in later centuries as the Thai grew less warlike, was probably a considerable source of revenue at that early period.

As regards the coin used in Siam for commercial purposes, and in which part of the revenue was collected, according to Mr. R. Le May¹ the Thai were the first rulers of Siam to introduce a standardized silver currency, and Siam was the first country of the Far East to adopt such a standard. He considers that they probably borrowed the idea of a currency from Burma, as neither China nor the Khmer Empire nor the (pre-Malay) Malay Peninsula ever had any standard currency as distinct from the use of gold and silver by weight. The well-known "bullet" type of coin (used up to the reign of Rāma IV) probably originated in some district of northern Siam in the twelfth century or earlier and was adopted and standardized by the Thai of Sukhodaya and Ayudhyā in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The weight of the standard tical was about 230–235 grains. There were also lesser bullet coins, and for smaller transactions cowrie shells were used, rated at about 6,400 to the tical.

A. SOURCES OF REVENUE²

The Siamese revenue system as elaborated during the Ayudhyā and early Bangkok periods may be considered under a number of headings as follows, before we deal with the actual administrative system.

¹ "The Coinage of Siam," *JSS.*, xxv, pt. i, Jan., 1932.

² Much of the information concerning the various types of taxes in this section is, except where otherwise stated, derived from Prince Damrong (4).



A comparison of the Siamese revenue system with those of Burma and Cambodia shows many similarities, which, after making every allowance for independent origin, nevertheless exhibit a number of ideas seemingly derived from a common source. Bearing in mind the number of Indian revenue terms employed, one cannot doubt that that common source was India. Some of the more striking terms and ideas that appear to be the result of Indian influence will be pointed out as we proceed.

1. *Contributions in Lieu of Personal Service.*

We have seen that in accordance with feudal ideas, the Siamese state always had a call on the personal services of every able-bodied male freeman. But just as the personal services which dependent states owed to their suzerain were in time of peace commuted by payment of tribute, so in certain circumstances might the personal services of Siamese subjects be commuted for certain kinds of payment. Primarily this payment was made in kind, and, as has been said in Chapter III, was called *svây*. It was sometimes allowed in the case of persons living in distant or inaccessible regions where it was difficult to make use of their personal services, and in these cases the contributions might be in padi. Usually, however, the *lekḥ svây*, as these persons were called, were only allowed to make contributions in kind because they lived, or were allowed to go and live, in districts where certain rare products of which the government had need were to be obtained. For example, permission was given to people to go and camp in the Tañ Brahyā Fai jungle of Eastern Siam where they searched for bats' excrement in the mountain caves. From this excrement saltpetre was prepared and sent to the



capital for the manufacture of gunpowder. People who lived in the tin-producing areas in the south were allowed to make contributions of this metal; while others supplied elephants, sapan, ivory and other rare products monopolized by the government.¹

A second method of commutation of personal service was by payment in money, called *gā rājakāra*, for the collection of which the patrons were responsible. As mentioned in Chapter III, this was largely taken advantage of by rich patrons so that a large number of their clients and slaves should be freed from service to the state and enabled to devote their whole time to the cultivation of their patrons' lands and their own maintenance. It was also taken advantage of by skilled artisans, such as carpenters, who could earn a considerable amount of money from their independent labour. According to La Loubère² in the reign of King Nārāyaṇa a *brāi hlvañ* had to pay two ticals per month for exemption from each of the six months' service required of him in each year, that is twelve ticals per annum. In the Bangkok period a *brāi hlvañ* had to serve only three months in the year, to escape which he had to pay six ticals per month, that is eighteen ticals per annum.³ Thus the *brāi hlvañ* had to pay six ticals more per annum in the later period than he did in the earlier, but if he chose to work he need only do three months instead of six months per annum. This change is one of several that indicate that in later times a desire for revenue in money rather than in kind began to make itself strongly felt. The charge

¹ Royal monopolies in salt, liquors, mines, and perhaps elephants, etc., existed in Ancient India.

² L. L., p. 94.

³ According to Prince Damrong (1), p. 501, a *brāi sam* had to pay six ticals per annum for exemption. This presumably refers to the later period when *brāi sam* remained in that state throughout the life of their patrons.



for exemption of a (redeemable) slave from personal service in the Bangkok period was five ticals per annum ; and in the second reign a similar assessment was placed on the Chinese population, none of whom were required for personal service, but were obliged to pay a poll-tax of ticals 1·50 every three years, increased to 4·25 in the fourth reign of the present dynasty. Both the amount of *svāy* paid in kind, and the money payments required for exemption from personal service, were originally supposed to represent the amount of money required for the hire of a substitute. *Svāy* payments in kind were abolished by King Rāma V, and replaced by *gā rājakāra*.

2. Produce Taxes.

During the Ayudhyā period various taxes known as *ākara* (= Indian *kara* ?) were collected as a proportion of the gains which the people derived from the cultivation of farms and gardens (there being no actual land tax), also for licences to catch fish, collect forest products, and distil arrack, the sum charged being equal to ten per cent of the gains. As in Ancient India the tendency of development was to substitute payment in kind by cash.

To deal first with the tax on the products of rice lands, or *ākara gā nā*, which was a tax on the gross produce of the rice fields of extremely ancient origin (corresponding to the *bhāga* or king's grain of Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* or *bali* of the *Smritis*). The oldest traditional tax of this kind ¹ was a levy of the fourth part of the gross products of the agricultural estates, and seems to correspond to a levy on the agricultural products, usually one-sixth, which was regarded as the king's right in Ancient India. This tax was later replaced

¹ Bowring's *Siam*, i, p. 187.



in Siam by a definite tax determined by the extent of the area of the land, which La Loubère¹ refers to as long existing in his time. He states that it was a money tax assessed at 0·25 tical per *rài*, but in the provinces half went to the *châu mô'ân*, and it was never well paid to the king on the frontiers. He adds that it was formerly only levied on cultivated areas, but that King Nārāyaṇa had ordered that the whole surface area was thus to be taxed, to force the people thereby to cultivate the whole of the land. About the beginning of the eighteenth century an innovation was introduced that did much to put the assessment of *ākara gū nā* on a fairer basis. A distinction was made between the different qualities of rice-growing lands, as was the case in Ancient India, as follows²:—

(1) *Nā gū go*, lands that did not suffer from excessive inundation or drought, which were taxed on the whole of their area, the assessment being made in accordance with the number of *gū go* (yokes of oxen) required to work the fields. Ownership of these lands was legalized by possession of documents known as *trā tèn* (red seals).

(2) *Nā fān løy*, lands which suffered usually either from drought or floods, and hence from which only light crops could be raised. Whereas, in the former case, the peasants were compelled by taxation to cultivate the whole of their properties, there being no reasonable excuse for leaving them uncultivated, in the case of the *nā fān løy* only those lands which it had been possible to cultivate in any given year were taxed, their output being judged by the officials according to the area of ground covered by stubble (*fān løy*). For the ownership of this type of land the necessary document was called *pai còñ* (legal title to property).

It was probably in the Dhanapurī period that the

¹ L. L., p. 83.

² Dilock, pp. 79 sqq.



gā nā was changed from a money tax to one in kind, and if so the change was probably caused by reason of the fact that the people had little money and the government was in need of rice to feed the troops, then continually engaged in warfare. This levy was at the rate of two *thān* (buckets) per *rāi*, and the people found it a burden, especially as in addition they had to sell to the government another two *thān* per *rāi* at the price fixed by the government of 0·625 tical per *thān*. In the third reign of the present dynasty, owing to the new demand for revenue in money, the *gā nā* levy in kind was abolished, and a return was made to the former fixed rate of assessment at 0·25 tical per *rāi*. In place of obliging the *brāi* to transport the padi to the royal granaries, a further charge of 0·125 tical per *rāi* was made, the total thus amounting to 0·375 tical per *rāi*. King Rāma IV, in order to encourage rice cultivation, enacted that new lands were only to be taxed at a reduced rate until after three (*nā gū go*) or four (*nā fān lōy*) full years of cultivation. He also assisted the farmers in other ways and introduced a number of other minor modifications, thus paving the way for the reforms of King Rāma V, which culminated in the introduction of an entirely new system.

The tax on garden produce, *ākara svān*, is one of the best known features of the Siamese system of taxation. It was a money tax rated at so much per annum on every fruit tree in bearing, according to the species, and, though the amounts differed slightly, the principle seems to have remained the same during both the Ayudhyā and Bangkok periods.¹ King

¹ La Loubère, p. 93 : Durian, 0·5 tical ; betel, 1 tical ; coco-nut tree, 0·05 tical ; orange, mango, and mangosteen trees, 1 tical, etc. Crawford, *Embassy to Siam*, 1828, p. 384 : Durian, 1 tical ; betel, 0·02 tical ; coco-nut tree, 0·02 tical ; mango and mangosteen, 0·125 tical, etc.

Rāma IV introduced certain reforms whereby the girth and height of each tree were taken into account. A differently assessed tax, called *sambāksara*, was levied on gardens where the products were ground crops, such as sugar-cane, tobacco, yams, beans, sesamum, bananas, vegetables, maize, etc.¹ The tax was levied until the reign of King Rāma IV, at the rate of one tical per *rāi*, when it was lowered by that king to 0.375 tical per *rāi*. It differed from the *ākara svan* in that it had only to be paid on land actually under cultivation (and was thus not a land tax), whereas the same amount of *ākara svan* had to be regularly paid each year until a new count was taken. Pepper seems until the reign of King Rāma III to have been free of tax as its cultivation was very much encouraged by the government. After the collection of the taxes had been farmed out during the third reign as *bhāṣi* (see below), King Rāma IV changed the method of collection of pepper tax to that of *sambāksara*.

In the Ayudhyā period the other kinds of *ākara* that existed were *ākara surā* or arrack tax (a tical per annum for each still, until doubled in King Nārāyaṇa's reign, with additional duties paid by the traders); *ākara gā nām*, or fishing taxes, collected according to the utensils employed; *ākara rākṣa kò*, or tax on island produce; and *ākara pōn pīa*, or tax on (Siamese) gambling houses. It would also appear that at least in the capital there was a tax on the earnings of prostitutes for La Loubère says, "The Siamese Lords are not less jealous of their Daughters than of their Wives: and if any one commits a fault, they sell her to a certain man, who has a privilege of prostituting them for Money, in consideration of a Tribute which he pays the King. 'Tis said that he has six hundred, all

¹ Bastian, p. 447.



Daughters of Officers in esteem. He likewise purchases Wives, when the Husbands sell them, being convicted of Infidelity.”¹

In the first and second reigns of the Bangkok dynasty, the various forms of *ākara* levied in the Ayudhyā period continued in force, but in the second reign the kinds of *ākara* mentioned in the last paragraph began to be farmed out. It is said that the idea of tax-farming (which was not in use in Ancient India), was suggested by an English ambassador, who made it understood that to engage in commerce was unworthy of a king.

In the third reign when the shortage of money revenue had become acute, so that it was difficult to carry on the work of government, pay officials their *pīa hvāt*, and purchase materials for carrying on warfare, not only was *ākara gā nā* made payable in money instead of in kind, but many new varieties of *ākara* were instituted to supply the deficiencies of the royal trading, which had become less profitable and which, as a result of European persuasion, was (at least during the first part of the reign) given up. These new kinds of *ākara* became known as *bhāṣī*, a word believed to be a corruption of a Chinese word introduced about this time and indicating the office of the Chinese tax-farmer, since in place of the royal trading monopolies Chinese farmers were sold the monopoly of collecting the taxes on products which had previously formed royal monopolies and on many other products as well. The importance of this innovation is reflected in the term used to express taxation in general which was *svāysāākara* or *svāysābādhyākara* in the Ayudhyā period but became *bhāṣīākara* in the Bangkok period. The products and enterprises from which *bhāṣī* was

¹ L. L., p. 74.



derived in the third reign included Chinese gambling houses and the lottery, both of which had recently been introduced from China; sundry taxes (collected from various products loaded on junks); the six royal monopolies; pepper, both the cultivators and foreign buyers being taxed; sapan; rosewood (both sellers and foreign merchants buying it to load their junks, being taxed); salt; coco-nut oil; various other oils; gamboge; resinous torches; firewood; attap; different species of bamboos (forest, small, and tufted); betel-vine props; shipbuilding timber; teak; cotton; tobacco; rope; indigo; dry meat and dry fish; prawn paste; brown sugar; palm sugar; cane sugar; sugar refineries; dried and other cakes; playing cards; tallow candles; lime; buffaloes; pack oxen; hire boats and towing canals. On the other hand, the *ākara* taxes on island products and on fisheries were abolished in the third reign on account of the religious scruples against the encouragement of the taking of life.

In the fourth reign Siam made treaties with foreign powers by which King Rāma IV's subjects were allowed to trade freely with foreign merchants. This entailed the definite and final giving up of royal trading and, in order to raise more money for the revenue to make good this loss, as well as to compensate the losses of princes and officials who had hitherto taken part in trading ventures on their own, it was necessary to institute new farmed taxes of the *bhāsī* type. These included taxes on opium (the import of which had previously been prohibited), hogs, fresh fish, fish of the Scomber genus, silk, bees' wax, vegetables, pots and pails, foundries, dug-outs, oars, paddles, etc., betting and cremation celebrations. King Rāma IV also re-established the fisheries tax and the tax on island products, which had been taken off in the previous



reign on account of religious scruples. In the case of the fisheries tax the regulations were very complicated, and the amount levied depended on the kinds of boats, nets, and traps used and the number of persons employed. The tax on island products concerned such produce as turtles and their eggs, and firewood on islands on the east coast of the Gulf. The islands on the west coast, which had long been reserved for the production of edible birds' nests, were separately farmed. In re-establishing these taxes, King Rāma IV overcame the religious scruples, which no doubt he shared with his predecessor, on the ground that, as it was, the produce was being stolen without any revenue accruing to the government, and the turtles were in danger of being exterminated unless protected by the tax-farmers, who were required to be responsible for this protection. King Rāma IV made other minor changes in the method of levying some of the *bhāṣiākara* and abolished the tax on buffalo carts, pack oxen, hire-boats, and towing canals.

A change was moreover brought about in the fourth reign which revolutionized the commerce of Siam, ushering in the modern era, and making all the above-mentioned farmed taxes antiquated and of small relative importance. In the third reign export of rice had been prohibited unless there was a three years' supply of grain in the country. But in the fourth reign this prohibition to export rice was removed and, with a regular demand, and improving means of transport facilitating the carriage of such bulky cargo, its cultivation was extended almost to the exclusion of other products, and it became the chief export. The figures for Siamese trade given in Appendix 5 at the end of this chapter, perhaps the only reliable ones available for the former condition of Siamese commerce,



refer to a time when the export of rice on a large scale had not yet begun, teak which later became the second article of commerce is not even mentioned, and the mass of the exports consisted of articles of relatively high value and small bulk.

3. *Customs and Inland Transit Duties (Cǎnkòp).*

From very early times Indian traders had found their way to the capital of Siam via the west coast ports of the Peninsula, while a fleet of Chinese junks annually brought mixed cargoes of manufactured goods from the ports of China and, on arrival in the Měnām, it was converted into a floating market. From the sixteenth century Europeans competed for a share in this trade without much success until commercial treaties were concluded in the Bangkok period. The old customs duties consisted of (1) an import tax which was at the rate of three per cent during the Ayudhyā period for frequently calling ships, five per cent for infrequent visitors. In the second reign of the Bangkok dynasty the latter paid eight per cent. (2) Ships' measurement dues (*cǎnkòp ro'a*) collected according to the capacity of the ships. La Loubère states¹ that in former times all boats paid one tical for each *vā* of length. He also states that in Nārāyaṇa's reign they added that every boat more than six cubits broad must pay six ticals and foreigners must also pay this amount. According to the *Evidence of the People of Ayudhyā* (p. 260), during the latter part of the Ayudhyā period, the charge was according to the beam measurement without taking into consideration any other dimensions. For ships upwards of four *vā* across the beam, if belonging to a friendly country accustomed to trade with Siam (such as China), the charge was twelve ticals

¹ L. L., p. 93.



per *vā* for each journey. If the ship belonged to a distant country not accustomed to trade with Siam, the charge was twenty ticals per *vā*. In the second reign of the Bangkok dynasty, according to Crawford,¹ Chinese junks paid forty ticals per *vā*, Malay trading vessels one hundred and thirty ticals each without regard to size, and European vessels one hundred and eighteen ticals per *vā*, besides a small anchorage duty.

(3) Export duty: The amount charged during the Ayudhyā period is not known, but it was probably according to a tariff varying with each kind of produce, as was the case in the second reign.² (4) Inland transit dues and octroi (*ākara khanòn* corresponding to *śulka* of the *Arthaśāstra*), which were collected at the rate of ten per cent³ from boats and carts at land and water customs houses, originally only in the *van rājadhānī*, but later in other parts of the country. According to the *Annals*⁴ this ancient form of tax was introduced into Siam in the reign of King Ekādaśaraṭha. (5) Market tax (*ākara talāt*) is also recorded in the *Annals*⁵ as having been first established by King Ekādaśaraṭha, and was also collected only in the neighbourhood of the capital where people gathered to trade. The tariff is not known, but it seems to have developed into the well-known shop and boat tax, which was farmed out, and which in the second reign of the present dynasty was, according to Crawford,⁶ at the following rates: every boat on the Mēnām which was used as a shop, whatever the commodity sold, was taxed at the rate of two ticals per annum. Other dealers were charged according to their trade, thus: a dealer in

¹ Crawford, op. cit., pp. 381, 382.

² See Crawford, op. cit., pp. 382, 383.

³ *Law of Offences against the Government*, Bradley, ii, p. 227.

⁴ *AA.*, vol. i, p. 256.

⁵ *AA.*, loc. cit.

⁶ Crawford, op. cit., p. 379.



cloth paid four ticals a year; a dealer in rice, two ticals; a fishmonger, one and a half ticals; a vender of tobacco, betel-leaf, and areca-nut, half a tical.

4. *Profits from Government Trading.*

This government trading seems to have been introduced in Siam early in the seventeenth century (although it was well known in India and recognized in the *Arthasāstra*). It continued to exercise an increasingly paralysing hold over the country's commerce until it was abolished early in the fourth reign of the present dynasty as a result of treaties entered into with European powers. It took the following forms: (1) Profits derived from the sale of various kinds of merchandise (obtained as *svāy* or by purchase) of which the export was monopolized and which foreign traders could only buy from the government. Tin was the first royal export monopoly, and was introduced by King *Drañ Dharma*, fearing that the government might otherwise not retain enough for its own use. King *Prāsāda Dòn*, finding this profitable, added saltpetre, lead, sapan, ripe areca, skins, eagle-wood, elephants, and ivory. At some later period birds' nests were monopolized, and in the second reign of the Bangkok dynasty, pepper, cardamoms, and gamboge were added, while teak was included in the third reign. Appendix 5 gives some idea of the total value of these products. (2) Profits derived from the sale of certain kinds of merchandise of which the import was monopolized and which foreign traders could only sell to the government. These were at first only arms and ammunition of which the government had to exercise control, but after satisfying its own requirements it sold some retail to the people. King *Prāsāda Dòn*, also finding this profitable, added the



import of cloth to the royal monopolies and sold it retail to the people in the markets. In the second reign of the Bangkok dynasty arms and powder were still monopolized, but the import of other goods was freely allowed after the government had first bought what it required. (3) Profits accruing from the proceeds of trading expeditions conducted by royal ships to foreign ports. In the Ayudhyā period royal ships went to India, China, and Java with cargoes of elephants, tin, and sapan, bringing back coloured cloth and porcelain, which the government sold retail at a profit. After Bangkok was founded there were still a few trading ships belonging to the king, princes, and high officials, but from a document referring to an undertaking in 1818 which is reproduced by Prince Damrong¹ the results appear to have been far from satisfactory. (4) Profits derived from the sale of a portion of the products of the royal demesnes (corresponding to the *sītā* of Kautilya). This undertaking seems never to have been revived during the Bangkok period, but in the time of King Nārāyaṇa we are told by La Loubère² that the king maintained royal fields and gardens worked by *brai hlvan* and slaves, of which half the produce was devoted to the maintenance of the royal household, slaves, horses, elephants, and cattle, while the rest was sold. This source of profit was, however, of relative unimportance from the point of view of revenue.

5. *Judicial Fees and Fines (Rijā).*

The *rijā* included fees for sealed title-deeds which were issued by the courts and prevented rights over cultivated lands being disputed. If disputes over money matters were settled by the courts, whichever party

¹ Prince Damrong (2), p. 336 sq.

² L. L., p. 94.



lost paid the other, and the government collected one-half of the amount as *rijā*, having in this case the special designation of *no'n bināy* (treasury fine). Other law court fees also come under this heading as well as confiscation of property from offenders. In the provinces the governors were allowed to retain all the legal confiscations, but only ten per cent of the fines, the rest going to the royal treasury.¹

6. *Irregular Receipts.*

The king often received presents from officials and governors and, according to La Loubère,² legacies bequeathed to him by them at their death. He also made extraordinary levies on certain occasions, as for example on the provincial governors for the support of ambassadors, or on the people for the building of forts and other public works which could not be paid for out of the ordinary revenue. Such extraordinary levies were well known in Ancient India. Confiscation of the property of officials and of their families who had grown wealthy by oppression was another source of revenue. The property of intestates also fell to the king and one-fourth of the estate of deceased *senāpatī* or *mantrī*, since it was supposed that they could not have come by all their gains honourably.³

7. *Tribute.*

The tribute sent periodically to the Siamese capital by the subject Lao states of the North and the Malay States of the Peninsula, until these were either lost or absorbed in the Siamese kingdom during the reign of

¹ L. L., p. 83.

² L. L., p. 94.

³ Low, *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, i, 1847, p. 351.



King Rāma V, is an interesting relic of an early form of revenue. The earliest records that we have of it,¹ however, speak of it as little more than nominal in value and symbolical of the tributary status. It was usually required to be paid triennially. Article 9 of the *Law of Treason* punishes the officials charged with bringing the tribute to the capital, but who did not in fact bring it, with death.

The *Siam Repository* for 1869 (p. 194) describes the tribute paid by the Rāja of Kelantan about that time. It consisted of one golden and one silver tree, each six cubits high and having eight rows of branches, six hundred and thirty-eight flowers, nine hundred and eighty leaves, six fixtures for branches, two pairs of snakes, four pairs of birds, and at the summit of each tree a large triple flower. The local produce accompanying the gold and silver trees consisted of twenty-six rings with coco-nut flowers wrought on them, ten pairs of spears with gold bands, forty pieces of white cloth. An eulogium and admission of vassalage were also sent.

The tribute of the Rāja of Tringano was the same, except that the local produce consisted of two gold thread sarongs, cloth, camphor, rattan, mats, clubs, and pearl shells.

The total amount of revenue that reached the royal treasuries was small since much that was collected, quite apart from the amounts legitimately allowed as recompense to the tax-gatherers, remained in the hands of officials of all ranks. In King Nārāyaṇa's time the annual money revenue, according to La Loubère,² was only about 1,500,000 ticals, though *gā nā* was then

¹ *Palatine Law*, Bradley, ii, p. 92, which enumerates the states sending the gold and silver flowers.

² L. L., p. 95.



paid in money. In the second reign of the Bangkok dynasty it was about 2,260,000 ticals, with a total revenue in money and kind of about 5,159,468 ticals (exclusive of *corvées*).¹ In the third reign, with the imposition of many new money taxes (Appendix 2 only concerns a few of the taxes) and the collection of *gā nā* in money, the total money revenue probably reached about 25,000,000 ticals, and was about the same in the fourth reign.

Exemptions from taxation were as follows: Monks and monastic lands were free from taxation as also were officials, who indeed subsisted largely on portions of revenues assigned to them and on fees and other exactions. The only other persons exempted from taxation were those *brāi hlvañ* who were engaged in trade during the period that they were not doing government work. They were provided with *trā bhūm gūm hām*, or immunity writs, which prevented the market overseers levying taxes on them so long as the goods they dealt in were of a value not exceeding four ticals.² This exemption was in order to assist the *brāi hlvañ* to earn their living by trade during their free time. It was frequently abused by ineligible relatives, who continued to use the *trā* after the death of the man in whose favour it had been issued.³ It was also abused by powerful officials who gave their own *brāi sam* forged *trā*, enabling them to buy provisions or other wants chiefly from the *brāi* or provincial officials who did not dare to look carefully at the *trā* and ascertain that they did not in fact emanate from the central administration. These patrons and the bearers of the forged *trā* were to be fined.⁴

¹ See Appendix 1.

² Rāma IV, Nos. 64 and 327.

³ Bastian, p. 449.

⁴ Rāma IV, No. 65.

B. ADMINISTRATION OF REVENUE¹

Until about the middle of the nineteenth century the revenue was small, as stated above, and little was spent since most government work was done by forced labour, which was the affair of the *Mahātdaiya*, *Kalāhom*, and *Sāstī*. In the fifteenth century the *Brah Glān*, as Minister of the Treasury, probably controlled all the receipts and expenditure within the area of the *vañ rājadhānī*, which, as with the other *senāpatī*, was as far as his responsibility extended. In the time of the *brahyāmahānagara* the provincial governors probably transmitted little to the capital. But by the end of the sixteenth century the officials known as *hlvañ glān*, holding posts as treasury officers under the provincial governments, were appointed by the *Brah Glān*, and transmitted part of the receipts to the capital.

When, later, the administration of all the provinces of the kingdom was divided between the *Mahātdaiya*, *Kalāhom*, and *Brah Glān*, the last mentioned had jurisdiction over most of the *ākara*, *svāy*, *gā rājakāra*, and transit dues (and later received certain *bhāṣī*) collected in the provinces under that ministry, the *Mahātdaiya* and *Kalāhom* having similar jurisdiction over the revenue collected in their provinces, except during the period when the provincial administration of the *Kalāhom* was suspended. Thus from the end of the seventeenth century a larger proportion of revenue found its way to the capital in accordance with the greater degree of centralization of the administration that had come about at that time. The royal trading which grew up in the seventeenth century was at first controlled by the *Brah Glān*, but this brought him so much in contact with foreigners that he had the

¹ My chief authority for the information in this section, except where otherwise stated, is Rāma V (1), pp. 37-42.



additional responsibility added on of controlling all the foreigners in Siam. The addition soon after of the duty of administering the *Kalāhom's* provinces caused him to neglect the treasury. The old *ākara* taxes consequently fell under the control of an official entitled *Brah Rājabhāktī*, chief of the independent *Glān Mahāsampāṭi*. But later this official lost them because the *bhāṣīākara* came to be divided between the *Mahātdaiya*, *Kalāhom*, *Mo'an*, and *Glān Singā*. Another development consequent on the *Brah Glān's* change of function was the formation of the separate *glān* just mentioned, which was known as the *Glān Singā* (Merchandise Treasury), under *Brah Śrībibāḍhana*, and became of great importance. It was the means of selling both *svāy* and products bought from the people, as well as retailing monopolized imports. In the third and fourth reigns of the Bangkok dynasty, when royal trading was restricted and finally abolished, the newly instituted *bhāṣī* taxes were placed under the control of the *Glān Singā*,¹ and so was the duty of collecting the Chinese poll-tax. The *Glān Singā* still received the *svāy* that was formerly sold abroad, and distributed it to the departments which had need of it. As for *Cāu Brahyā Brah Glān*, having had the duties of a Minister of Foreign Affairs added to his other duties in the seventeenth century, he was soon overwhelmed by having to administer the *Kalāhom's* provinces. His treasury work was neglected, so that nothing remained of it except the distribution of *pā hvāt*. When the *Kalāhom's* provinces were restored to him and only a few remained under the *Brah Glān*, this official became mainly a Minister of Foreign Affairs supported by certain kinds of *bhāṣī* yielded by his remaining provinces.

¹ See Appendix 2.



Besides the *Glān Mahāsampāti* and the *Glān Singā*, there were also a number of other *glāns* or treasuries, usually quite independent of the *Cāu Brahyā Brah Glān's* jurisdiction and often closely attached to some *kram* whose interests they served. Such were the *Glān of the Right* and *Glān of the Left*, two offices which controlled some of the old *ākara* taxes,¹ but were originally a kind of military or public works store. The *brāi hlvañ*, of course, received no pay and only those necessities were distributed to them which they required for their work. The *Glān of the Right* originally supplied mainly iron goods and the *Glān of the Left* supplied painting and decorating material. The officers in charge of the *brāi* were not expert in business matters, and besides, the whole of their time was required for looking after their own men. On the other hand, the officials of these two *glāns* not only were craftsmen, but also were in touch with the market where the goods required could be obtained and could buy them at the lowest prices with the least possible delay.

The *Glān Rājakāra* collected a large part of the *svāy* (especially mats) from the provinces under the *Kram Dā*, but this being insufficient for supplying the government needs it also had to buy some more, as was the case with the *Glāns of the Right and Left*. It also had under its control the farming out of the lucrative firewood *bhūṣī*, which was levied in the *Kram Dā's* provinces. There were various other special *glāns* which were concerned with such matters as the purchase and distribution of yellow robes to the monks, the king's alms-giving, and palace expenditure.

The officers of the *Glān Svan*, called *nāy ravāñ*, collected the *ākara svan* according to the amounts laid

¹ See Appendix 4.



down in the title-deeds which were issued by the officials of this *glān*. Similar officers, the *khā hlvañ senā*, who were attached to the *Kram Nā*, had the duty of issuing title-deeds for the fields and collecting the *ākara gā nā*. The *Kram Nā* was also entrusted with the work of buying rice for the royal granaries and distributing it to those engaged on government work. The *Kram Mo'an* was remarkable in that, though it derived some revenue from the issue of house title-deeds, it had no *glān* attached to it until in the Bangkok period it became responsible for the newly instituted shop and boat tax, which was naturally closely connected with its other activities. But this tax was later transferred to the *Mahātdaiya*, as also was the *svay* which it formerly collected from the *vañ rājadhānī*.

We may now examine a little more closely the actual method of tax collection and the deportment of the revenue officers in their relations with the people. We will begin with those taxes, the field and garden taxes, that were collected directly by the *nāy ravāñ* and *khā hlvañ senā*. At the beginning of every reign, about the time of the coronation, there was carried out by these officials a survey known as "Walking the gardens and fields". The *nāy ravāñ* not only inspected the area of each cultivator's gardens, to see how much had been changed into padi land, and to measure any new areas cleared of jungle, but also made a new estimate as to the numbers of each kind of fruit tree in bearing, taking into consideration the numbers of trees that had died since the last estimate was made and also those that had been planted since that occasion. Thus justice was done to the cultivators and the amount of tax due from them was marked on their new title-deed, which amount was collected from



them each year until a new inspection was made. If the gardeners cut down the trees knowing that inspection was about to take place they were punished. Before the inspection the officials were required to make offerings to the spirits of the place. Small payments had of course to be made to the *nāy ravān* and also to those who filled in the registers and made out the new title-deeds. The officials who counted the trees and made out the lists were obliged, on the Buddhist holy day (*vān brah*) following the inspection, to assemble in the Chapel Royal and swear solemnly that their count had been correct and the work honestly carried out.¹ These surveys were carried out at the beginning of every reign, but also on two or three other occasions in the course of a long reign like the fifth of the Bangkok dynasty. The procedure for walking the fields was almost the same, but during those periods of history when the *gā nā* tax was in kind, the people themselves had to bring the amounts required of them to the royal granaries. The method of collecting taxes directly by means of government officials, as in the case of the field and garden taxes, was less satisfactory to the government than was the farming of taxes, but it was less oppressive to the people. The officials were often careless in their work of inspection, and as, unlike the tax-farmer, they were not required to produce a certain stipulated amount of revenue, they only collected whatever amount they could obtain without undue trouble to themselves.

With the farmed taxes the procedure was as follows : The taxes were only to be levied according to a fixed rate (usually ten per cent) and the farmers were prohibited from oppressing the people, though the conditions under which they had to work, apart from the

¹ Prince Damrong (4), p. 30.



temperament of the individual farmer, often obliged them to exercise oppression. The tax-farmer (*nây ākara* or *câu bhāṣī*), who was usually Chinese, was responsible to an official (*câu cāmnan*) of the *Glân Singă* or any other *kram* to which he had to pay the amount of tax money he had agreed to deliver during the course of the year. This sum was arrived at by putting up for auction each particular *bhāṣī* each year, the bidders being guided in the amount of their bids by preliminary inquiries and inspection of the places where the particular trade was carried on. The farmer paid the money to the treasury as follows: three months' payment in advance for the first month (the two months' instalments being in the nature of a guarantee) and so on at the rate of one-twelfth of the total sum per month until the tenth month, the guarantee money being used for the eleventh and twelfth monthly payments.¹ It will be readily appreciated that to obtain these lucrative monopolies the would-be farmers sometimes bid sums that meant that considerable extortion had to be practised by them to enable them to fulfil their obligations. Rarely if ever did a tax-farmer fail to realize the money which he had agreed to pay and he usually contrived to make a very comfortable profit from his lease. In some cases, such as the gambling tax, the monopoly was not sold as a whole, but various areas of the capital and of the provinces were put up for auction as separate units, and the rights sold to different farmers in each case, who might sometimes let them out to sub-farmers. In the case of some special products, for example the birds' nest monopoly, the farmer had a monopoly not merely of collecting the taxes, but of the trade in that article, and in connection with certain products which had formerly

¹ Cartwright, *JSS.*, vol. xviii, p. 239.



been royal monopolies, he thus superseded the king as a merchant. The sum which he paid for this privilege was, however, from the revenue point of view, not to be distinguished from that paid by the tax-farmers pure and simple and was apparently also classed as *bhāṣī*.

The *nāy ākara* had considerable powers and responsibility, which he usually abused. His agents established their offices at such places as the junctions of canals and streams, where with the beating of gongs they called upon all passing boats to stop and submit to a search. The slightest sign of fraud was punished by confiscation of all the trader's goods. The farmer who controlled the distillation of arrack, on the discovery of a little contraband spirit, would confiscate all the goods and enslave the family of the delinquent.¹ In the same way only those persons were allowed to catch turtles or collect firewood who had received the necessary permission from the particular *nāy ākara* concerned. In the case of turtles, the farmers were obliged to see that the species was not exterminated and that those individuals with eggs were spared. The gambling tax farmer had power to control the behaviour of the gamblers, as well as his staff who ran the gambling houses; while the opium farmers had the onerous duties of buying and selling the opium themselves, selling it only to Chinese, and preventing others from selling opium. In all these duties the Chinese tax-farmers had the support of the government officials whom they could call on in case of necessity to help them to enforce their authority; and in particular they were supported by the high dignitaries of the department to which they had to pay the amount stipulated and who largely depended for their own income on the success of the farmer. In addition their

¹ Pallegoix, *Royaume Thai ou Siam*, vol. i, p. 305.



position was strengthened by their being regarded as officials during their term of office. If they had no higher *śākti nā* grade they were given one of not less than 400, but they retained it only so long as they continued to be tax-farmers. They also had to drink the water of allegiance like other officials.

Pallegoix¹ describes the customs houses as little square buildings, open on all sides, with square pointed roofs. Here sat several customs officials, who by the sound of cymbals called the attention of all the passing boats, while their chief usually stayed in a neighbouring house. When a ship was hove to, it was boarded by the officials who took whatever pleased them. Indeed, they were obliged to do so as they received no salary, and had to collect anything they could lay their hands on. Sometimes, if a ship wished to pass without payment, the captain threw them a few coins and his ship was allowed to proceed forthwith. But if a ship refused to pay attention to the call of the cymbals and proceeded on its way, the officials pursued the ship in their canoes and the captain was likely to be seized and thrown into chains from which he could only escape by making a large payment. Dignitaries and those passing in fine boats were not stopped as they were not thought to be engaged in commerce. Those merchants who paid customs duty to a dignitary at the capital received a document, production of which satisfied the customs officials. Neale² gives an amusing account of the old customs officer who lived in isolation in a hut at the mouth of the Cāndapūraṇa river, whence he seems to have kept a sharp look-out for approaching ships and junks and apparently lived mainly on "charity".

The triennial poll-tax on Chinese resident in Siam

¹ Op. cit., i, p. 306.

² Neale, *Narrative of a Residence in Siam*, 1852, pp. 108 sqq.



Further illustrates Siamese methods of tax collection. Every three years the Chinese were required to pay a tax amounting to 4.25 ticals, as a receipt for which each man had a string tied round his wrist stamped with a government seal, which secured his freedom from molestation by tax-collecting officials for the next three years. He also received a certificate in which the identification particulars of the individual were set out. If any Chinese wished to dispense with the poll-tax seal round the wrist, and take only the document, he might do so on a payment of 6.5 ticals instead of 4.25 ticals. In the capital payment was made to the *Glān Singā*, which had control over this source of revenue, but in the provinces the money was collected by special royal commissioners (*kḥā hlvan*). Those who could not pay were required to do a month's work for the three years; but Chinese who had official posts in the government service or who, had they been Siamese, would have been excused from payment of *gā rājakāra*, were not required to pay the poll-tax. Heavy penalties were inflicted on persons who forged poll-tax seals or documents.¹

It will be seen from the above that the Chinese were much less highly taxed than the Siamese, and in addition their hard-working habits and lower standard of living gave them a great advantage over the Siamese masses. This ultimately led to most of the commerce of the country as well as the labour market getting into Chinese hands. Though the dangers of the situation were realized long ago, the necessity of utilizing Chinese labour was undoubted, so that only in very recent times has the government been compelled, by unemployment among the Siamese, to check the inflow of Chinese immigrants.

¹ *Bangkok Calendar*, 1871, pp. 68 sq.



With such a cumbrous system of taxation as that described above, one is not surprised to find that the actual revenue obtained with the accompaniment of oppressive measures was much less than would have been the case under a just and equitable system. The tax-farmers employed their own staff of collectors who, although they were nominally under the supervision of government officers, usually managed to exact more than the just portion of tax due. In the same way the official tax-gatherers, though they were not under the same necessity of handing over a certain agreed sum to the treasury, were equally interested in making a profit for themselves. The higher officials of the various *glāns*, in the absence of anything in the nature of a budget system, had even greater opportunities of enriching themselves; for example by utilizing the revenues under their control for the purchase of inferior or unnecessary goods for distribution to the *brāi* engaged on government service, such purchases giving them every opportunity to make large profits. In short, every conceivable species of corruption was in vogue amongst the army of officials who handled the king's revenues at one stage or another, with a result that only a comparatively small proportion of the amount collected became available for legitimate government expenditure. The endeavour to prevent this corruption, oppression, and misappropriation on the part of the officials, was naturally a fertile source of legislation, and the following types of offences for which heavy punishments were enforced by the *Law of Offences against the Government* will serve as examples: Officials who stole objects belonging to the king whether inside or outside the treasury (article 2); officials who deleted from the registers names of persons liable to pay taxes (articles 22, 38); officials who collected more than



they should and so cheated the people (article 30); officials misappropriating fines, confiscations, or taxes that should have been sent to the treasuries (articles 35, 38, 46, 98); market overseers who allowed monopolized goods to be sold (article 36); customs officials who permitted foreigners to deal in monopolized goods (article 37).

The degeneration of the revenue system was encouraged during the later centuries by the splitting up of the functions of revenue collection and administration among a number of *krams* each having its treasury, a further manifestation of that late tendency to the loss of functional differentiation that we have noticed in earlier chapters. The experiment of uniting several *glāns* under the control of one official was eventually made, but without success; and it remained for King Rāma V to sweep away the old system in its entirety and unite the administration of the various revenues under the control of a central Ministry of Finance, modelled on Western lines. This was a bold step which did much to put the finances of Siam on a sound basis, though its necessary corollary, the rooting out of the old spirit of corruption amongst individual officials, was a process which required time and perseverance.

C. EXPENDITURE

In considering the character of Siamese governmental expenditure it must be borne in mind that the ideals of the peoples of Further India differ from our own in putting the glorification of religion before all else. Cities like Añkor or Pagān represent in the highest degree the materialization of such ideals; and the builders of the ancient capitals of Siam were actuated



by the same motives, even though they achieved less stupendous results. Hence it was that a large proportion of the wealth and man-power that the king could command was utilized in embellishing the capital with royal Buddhist temples and monasteries, Hindu temples in which the Court Brahmans carried out their rites, shrines for the guardian spirits of the city, and magnificent palaces. The last mentioned differed little from the temples in the style and grandeur of their construction, as befitted the dwellings of kings who were identified with deities. It was indeed this display of concentrated wealth in the capital that gave the early European travellers a highly exaggerated opinion of the resources of the country. The fact is that until modern times very little in the way of public works was done for the inhabitants of the provinces. Indeed, Nature had so abundantly provided for them that they had few real wants which the state could usefully have attempted to relieve, and until comparatively recent times it formed no part of the programme of Siamese kings to raise the standard of living of their subjects. Wealth was therefore simply drained from them in order that the king might adorn the capital with monuments to his piety, while the innumerable small temples found in every village throughout the country were almost all the foundations of private merit-makers.

It is not remarkable then that, of a total annual money revenue at the end of the Ayudhyā period which perhaps did not greatly exceed one million ticals, nearly 50,000 ticals was, according to the *Evidence of the People of Ayudhyā* (p. 262), expended annually by the king on alms to the monks of the royal monasteries, particularly in connection with important ceremonies. Appendix 6 gives some idea of the scale on which *pīa hvāt* or royal bounty was lavished by the



king on those whom he saw fit to reward for their services, this presumably being, in the case of the highest members of the royal family, in addition to proportions of certain revenues that were allotted to them as is mentioned in Appendix 2. A further illustration of the important place taken by religious expenditure is supplied by the statement in the *Evidence of the People of Ayudhya* that, apart from the usual annual expenses of the types enumerated above, the following sums for emergencies had always to be kept ready in the treasury: 400,000 ticals for war or the suppression of rebellion, and (nearly as much) 320,000 ticals, for royal cremations or other special ceremonies.

Money revenue, however, as already mentioned, formed but a small proportion of the total resources which the Siamese kings had at their command. The greater part of their religious and other works were carried out by the extensive forces of unpaid labourers and skilled craftsmen which, even when allowance is made for those who were illegally retained by the officials for their own purposes, were at the disposal of the king. We have seen in previous chapters the elaborate efforts that were made to marshal the country's man-power for government service, and we shall now proceed to give a brief outline of the sort of works that were accomplished whenever the men were not required for warfare.

In Northern Siam laterite is plentiful and this was the material used in the construction of most of the temples of the kingdom of Sukhodaya, ornamentation being carried out in a hard and durable stucco with some use of sandstone for friezes and carvings. In the central parts of Siam, however, which are mainly alluvial, little stone was used, and brick was from early times the main medium of construction, the tapering



brick *cetiya*, or relic shrine, being indeed the most characteristic monument throughout Central Siam. Timber, of which the best kind was teak, was employed mainly in buildings not used for worship ; while throughout the country, as elsewhere in Further India, the indispensable bamboo was used for the riverside dwellings and floating houses of the peasants. From early times buildings in the Chinese style were occasionally erected either for religious use or to gratify the curiosity of kings. Gilding and fresco painting as well as carving and image casting in connection with the royal temples and palaces afforded ample work for the skilled craftsman attached to the royal household.

European influence in architecture, though introduced in the sixteenth century, did not make itself strongly felt until the seventeenth, when palaces and private residences as well as aqueducts, bridges, and roads were constructed by French engineers. At the same time the primitive earthworks or walls which constituted the defences of Siamese cities were in many cases replaced by fortifications based on the methods of Vauban. After the French were driven from the country at the close of King Nārāyaṇa's reign, these various works were to some extent kept up by the Siamese until the fall of Ayudhyā. The new capital at Bangkok was almost purely Siamese until about the middle of the nineteenth century, when the European style of public works was again introduced.

There is no evidence that hospitals, which existed in some countries possessed of an Indian civilization, were ever established in Siam before the French missionaries founded one in 1669. When in 1682 the missionaries rendered valuable assistance in connection with a smallpox epidemic, King Nārāyaṇa presented the bishop with a gilded chair similar to that used by



the Buddhist Patriarch, in recognition of his services ; but the king refused the bishop's suggestion that he should endow two hundred beds in the hospital, on the grounds that such institutions had no place in Siamese custom.¹ King Rāma V, in advocating the building of hospitals and training of doctors, speaks of the idea as practically a new one in Siam.²

Though to give a true proportion to Siamese ideals as expressed in public works it has been necessary to give priority of place to religious foundations and palaces, there was one great utilitarian work that has been carried out on a vast scale by kings of Siam from very early times. Undertaken though it primarily was with the object of hastening the flow of revenue to the royal treasury, yet at the present day it remains a primary asset to the country as a whole and especially to the peasant class. I refer to the system of canals (*glòñ*) for inland navigation and irrigation, which form a network throughout the lowlands of Central Siam. The Siamese are a riverine people and had little use for roads, which indeed would have been difficult of construction in a low alluvial country subject to heavy rains. A system of canals was therefore a necessity for trade and as a means of communication in both peace and war, some of the canals being deliberately cut with the sole object of moving troops and supplies. To develop the rice-growing lands, canals for irrigation became necessary, but this was on the whole a later undertaking than the cutting of canals for inland navigation. This canal system, particularly in the deltaic region, required the construction of numerous bridges.

The inscription of Rāma Gāmhèn mentions the

¹ E. W. Hutchinson, *JSS.*, vol. xxvi, pt. i, April, 1933, p. 18.

² Rāma V (1), p. 36.



existence of a “*srīlhaṇsa*” at Sukhodaya, which Professor Cœdès translates¹ as a “digue”, presumably some kind of irrigation work. References to similar undertakings and navigation canals in the *Northern Annals*² indicate that the Thai were familiar with such works long before this time. The later inscriptions of Sukhodaya also mention roads as well as canals. In A.D. 1498 the deepening and clearing of two ancient canals is recorded in the *Annals of Ayudhyā*,³ while the inscription of the Śiva statue found at Kāmbēnbejra and dated A.D. 1510 records among other royal works the restoration of an irrigation canal.⁴ About A.D. 1534 a very important work for the future history of Siam was begun. This was the cutting of *Glōn Pāṇkōk Hyai* and its branch which linked between them the ends of a big curve of the *Mēnām*. The citadel of Bangkok was built to guard the lower mouth of this canal, and it thus formed the nucleus of the modern capital of Siam. Through the erosive action of the stream, the canal was gradually widened until it was able to receive the main mass of the river which forsook its ancient winding course and has since flowed through the canal on the banks of which the present city of Bangkok was built. In all several thousand kilometres of canals were dug since that period, and tens of thousands of acres of unproductive land were made fit for cultivation by irrigation.)

¹ Cœdès, i, p. 46.

² Notton, *Annales du Siam*, vol. i, pp. 139, 157, 177.

³ *AA.*, vol. i, p. 13.

⁴ Cœdès, i, p. 157.



APPENDICES TO CHAPTER IX

Appendix 1

The annual revenue in the reign of King Rāma II is estimated by Crawford in his *Embassy* (p. 387) as follows :—

	<i>Ticals</i>
Spirit-tax	460,000
Gaming	460,000
Fishery of the Mēnām	64,000
Shop-tax	121,880
Monopoly of Tin	54,000
Do. of Ivory	40,000
Cardamoms and Japan-wood	45,000
Eagle-wood	24,000
Gamboge	100,000
Swallows' nests	5,000
Turtles' eggs	400,000
Pepper	105,000
Sugar	264,000
Customs	520,000
Tax on fruit-trees, etc.	2,295,338
Land-tax	20,000,000
Corvées	201,250
Chinese poll-tax	
	25,159,468

Appendix 2

In the National Library at Bangkok there is a list of some of the *bhāṣiākara* revenue for the year A.D. 1845 in the reign of King Rāma III¹ in which are recorded the names of the farmers, the amounts collected, and the way in which the money was distributed. At that time all the taxes mentioned in this list were paid to the *Glān Singā*, a small proportion in most cases being first deducted and allotted to three or four high members of the royal family, the *Vān Nā* receiving the largest share. Here we only give the approximate totals of the various taxes.

¹ Prince Damrong (4), pp. (15) sqq.



	<i>Ticals</i>
Sapan	59,200
Pepper	33,600
Various taxes on junks	22,000
Former royal monopolies	13,600
Dried meat and fish	8,800
Cotton and gumlac	14,800
Cotton and tobacco	13,920
Various goods	8,960
Prawn paste	4,160
Brown sugar	52,800
Firewood used in sugar refineries	5,600
Sugar candy	8,000
Palm sugar in certain provinces	6,480
Cane sugar	12,800
Birds' nests	17,860
Bamboos in certain provinces	9,640
Cotton and planks in certain provinces	480

The actual total given in the document is 294,438·46 ticals.

Appendix 3

The estimate of annual revenue in the reign of Rāma IV given by Pallegoix,¹ though probably not very accurate, is as follows :—

	<i>Ticals</i>
Ricefields (<i>gā nā</i>)	2,000,000
Gardens	5,545,000
Plantations	500,000
Teak	80,000
Sapan	200,000
Coco-nut oil	500,000
Brown sugar	250,000
Palm sugar	10,000
Rice export	100,000
Salt	50,000
Pepper	400,000
Cardamoms	10,000
False cardamoms	20,000
Gumlac	12,000
Tin	60,000
Iron	60,000
Ivory	45,000
Gamboge	24,000
Rhinoceros horns	2,000
Stags' horns	4,000
Buffalo horns	500
Buffalo and oxen skins	2,600

¹ Pallegoix, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 309-311.



	<i>Ticals</i>
Benzoin	1,000
Birds' nests	100,000
Dried fish	30,000
Dried shrimps	6,000
Prawn paste	10,000
Wood-oil	8,000
Resin	7,000
Rosewood	40,000
Torches	20,000
Rattans	12,000
Bark of certain trees used for tanning	10,000
Masts	9,000
Bamboo	90,000
Attaps	15,000
Firewood	15,000
Opium	400,000
Arrack	500,000
Gambling houses	500,000
Fisheries	70,000
Markets	100,000
Floating houses	150,000
Tobacco	200,000
Eagle-wood	45,000
Island produce	6,000
Export duties	300,000
Exemption from corvées (<i>gā rājākāra</i>)	12,000,000
Chinese poll-tax (collected every three years)	2,000,000
Measurement dues from sea-going ships	80,000
Government royalties on gold mine at Pān Tāhūn	10,000
Prostitutes	50,000
Legal fees, etc.	15,000
Revenue sent by northern provinces	50,000
Revenue sent by southern provinces	40,000
Lotteries	200,000

The grand annual total of revenue in this reign amounted to about 26,964,100 ticals, which was about the same as that collected annually in the third reign.

Appendix 4

In the earlier part of the Bangkok period the work of collecting *bhāṣṭākara* was divided among the various *krams* (the arrangement having been made either in the third or fourth reign). The following list¹ was

¹ Prince Damrong (4), pp. (26) sqq.



made in the fifth reign in the year A.D. 1872, before the reorganization of finance was undertaken :—

Under the Kram Braḥ Glāṇ Mahāsampāṭi.

Coco-nut oil, fish oil, arrack in twenty-six provinces, gaming in fifty-one communes, fisheries in sixteen communes, plantations in thirty-four provinces, Pāṇ Bli towing canal, masts, garden tax in 41,541 gardens.

Under the Kram Braḥ Glāṇ Singā.

Lottery, Siamese and Chinese gambling houses in twenty communes, various betting taxes in the provinces, brown sugar, sesame oil, Scomber fish, hogs, dried Chinese cakes, shrimp paste, rope, indigo, tobacco, silk, bees' wax, pottery, pepper, fresh and salt-water fish, birds' nests, dried prawns.

Under the Kram Braḥ Kalāhom.

Arrack in Bangkok, rice-flour, areca, molasses, iron, charcoal, birds' nests in the provinces of Saṅkhla and Traṇ.

Under the Kram Mahātdaiya.

Boat and shop taxes, dug-out boats, instruments for disentangling cotton, theatres, bamboo, teak.

Under the Kram Braḥ Glāṇ of the Left.

Salt-pits and cotton wool.

Under the Kram Braḥ Glāṇ of the Right.

Tobacco in twenty-three provinces and bamboo charcoal.

Under the Middle Kram Dā.

Pepper, silk, forest bamboo, attaps, island produce, sundries, sapan, rice export.

*Under the Kram Brah Glān Rājākāra.*

Garden tax from ten provinces, costs of garden title-deeds, resinous torches and wood oils, firewood.

Under the Kram Dā of the Left.

Salt, wooden paddles and oars.

Under the Kram Nā.

Gā nā.

The total *bhāṣiākara* money (without *gā rājākāra*, *svay*, and opium *bhāṣi*, which are not mentioned in this list) was 29,912,800 ticals per annum.

Appendix 5

According to Malloch's *Siam*, 1852, the annual value of the exports of Siam was then 5,585,000 ticals, and of the imports 4,831,000 ticals. The exports were made up as follows:—

	<i>Ticals</i>
Bark	110,000
Birds' nests	172,000
Cardamoms	124,000
Cotton (raw)	450,000
Cotton cushions and mattresses	211,500
Fish	213,500
Hides	255,500
Iron and ironware	180,000
Dried buffalo and deer meat	120,500
Oil (coco-nut, fish, and wood)	101,000
Rice	150,000
Pepper	99,000
Skins	195,000
Tobacco	100,000
Tin and tin utensils	253,500
Sticklac	254,000
Sugar	708,000
Hog's lard, tallow, and fat	146,000
Sapan wood	350,000
Agila wood	100,000

Appendix 6

According to the *Evidence of the People of Ayudhyā* (p. 262), *piā hvāt* was annually distributed at the close of the Ayudhyā period as follows:—

- (1) The *Brah Mahā Uparāja*, 40,000 ticals.
- (2) The *Argamaheṣī*, 24,000 ticals.
- (3) *Cāu fās*, 8,000 ticals each.
- (4) *Brah Aṅga Cāus*, 4,000 ticals each.
- (5) Royal grandchildren, 1,600 ticals each.
- (6) The members of the harem (*brah sanam*) received a total of 16,000 ticals, individuals receiving variously 4,000, 2,400, 1,600, 800, and 400 ticals each.
- (7) Officials having access to the king's presence in the capital received a total of 120,000 ticals, the amounts received by individuals varying from 4,000 to 80 ticals per annum.



CHAPTER X

THE CHURCH

The characteristics of Siamese Buddhism and the extent of its hold over the people are so well known that nothing will be required by way of introduction to the subject of this chapter, which will deal with the nature of the relationship between Church and State, and the organization of Church administration. Accurate statistics bearing on the subject in earlier times are not available, but at the present time there are about 127,000 monks, 83,000 novices, and 122,000 *śiśya*, or boys acting as attendants to the monks from whom they receive their education. These are distributed through nearly 16,000 monasteries. A few old women who have retired from the world as nuns (*nān jī*) have their huts in the neighbourhood of some of the monasteries, where they are tolerated but receive scant respect. Being without organization and of little social importance they will require no further mention here.

Considerable though the numbers of the inhabitants of monasteries are in proportion to the total population of the country, and despite the fact that what education there was was in the hands of the monks, the tendency has been rather to secularize the administration of the Church, than to allow the latter to obtain any degree of temporal power. Indeed, the very limited sphere of influence of the clergy in the heart of a people devoted to religious activities, and the almost complete separation of Church and State, are at first sight surprising. Anything in the nature of a religious



hierarchy is of quite modern development for, in former days, the existence of a highly organized religious body would have constituted a menace to the absolute power of the king, such as no Siamese ruler could have tolerated. In any case a desire for temporal power by the monks was contrary to the teachings of Hinayāna Buddhism, and was further minimized by the fact that only a very small proportion of the brotherhood was made up of men who intended to devote themselves permanently to the religious life, while these were for the most part devout monks, learned in the law of Buddha. The vast mass of the Order always consisted of young men who, out of respect for custom and in deference to the wishes of their parents, spent a few months in the yellow robe acquiring a rudimentary religious training, after which they were glad to return to the worldly life. In fact, ambitious persons desirous of material power and wealth could so readily obtain it in the legitimate sphere of government service by outstripping their indolent countrymen and, if they chanced to be in the Order, could so easily leave it, that there was little to tempt the monk to meddle in political affairs.

As a religious community the Order always received, from the time Hinayāna Buddhism was accepted as the national religion at Sukhodaya in the thirteenth century, the greatest respect from the people of all classes. The king built temples and annually supplied with *Kāṭhina* gifts a large number of royal monasteries in the capital and provinces, while the others were similarly supplied by officials and freemen. The daily wants of the mendicants were unfailingly met by the great mass of merit-makers, while the monks of the royal temples received in addition a small allowance from the king. Many of the monasteries had lands with slaves to work them, and these lands were held by them in perpetuity



and were inalienable and tax free. The royal monasteries also received grants from the treasury, or were allocated the proceeds of certain domains. Another important privilege enjoyed by the Order was the freedom of its members from the annual period of military or other service due to the king by all freemen. It seems that this privilege was liable to abuse, for La Loubère records¹ that, for fear of being deprived of much of his available man-power in this way, the king was obliged to hold examinations from time to time, on the results of which large numbers of ignorant monks were obliged to return to the secular state. Probably such royal intervention was seldom necessary, since the rigorous rules of the Order and the enforced celibacy were such as to make most prefer the worldly life, despite its accompanying toils.

This mention of royal intervention in the affairs of the Order brings us to a consideration of the exact delimitation of the secular and spiritual spheres of influence in Church administration. The royal power (*ānācākra*) of the king gave him authority to act in such material matters as the appointment of monks to high offices (*tāmhnēn*), and to oblige them to obey the ordinary secular laws necessary to good government. Nor could persons who became thieves or rebelled escape the royal punishment by becoming monks. "Sometimes, but very rarely, and in affairs of a certain Nature, he (the king) will consult the principal *Sancras*, which are the Superiors of the *Talapoins*; whose credit in other matters he depresses as much as he can, though in appearance he honors them exceedingly."² On the other hand, the spiritual power (*buddhacākra*) wielded by the monks was supreme in matters concerning the inner discipline of the Order, in which they followed

¹ L. L., p. 115.

² L. L., p. 103.



only the Law of Buddha. Again, if a point in a royal order or decree appeared to be contrary to Buddhist law, the monks might hold a meeting to discuss it, and apprise the king, who would not be likely to ignore it. Thus an objection raised by the monks resulted in King Rāma I abandoning his intention to melt down an ancient standing image of the Buddha at Ayudhyā and make a new one.

One may thus define the king's powers in relation to the Order as limited to what was necessary to enable him to fulfill his position as absolute head of the state. The priestly functions which he acquired by virtue of his coronation were Brahmanic not Buddhist, for the coronation ceremonies were primarily Hindu, performed by Brahman priests. He merely accepted the headship of the Order as its lay protector, a position traditionally associated with Buddhist kingship. Nevertheless, the very acceptance of a layman as protector of the Order tended in some measure, as indicated above, to the secularization of its administration. This tendency seems to have been accentuated in the first reign of the present dynasty, when a number of decrees were issued by the king which were added to the corpus under the heading *Kaṭhmāy Braḥ Saṅgha*. These not only deal with the smallest details of monastic discipline, but are addressed to both monks and lay officials such as provincial governors, with the object evidently of obtaining the co-operation of the latter in seeing that they were carried into effect. But these were abnormal times; the Order had but recently recovered from the effects of the Burmese invasion, while even more recently the extravagant claims of King Tāk in his madness had demoralized a large section of the monks. Strong steps had therefore to be taken to bring about the purification of religion and hence we have the issue of



these extraordinary decrees, while at the same time the revision of the *Tripitaka* was undertaken.

A *mahāthera* or *saṅgharāja* is mentioned in Rāma Gāmhēn's inscription as having come from Nagara Śrī Dharमारāja. Previously he had probably come from Ceylon and introduced the rules of the Order as established in Ceylon, receiving the protection of Rāma Gāmhēn, who made Buddhism the national religion. No doubt the office of *Saṅgharāja* existed also at Ayudhya from its foundation, although there is no mention of such an appointment in the *Annals*¹ until A.D. 1569, in the reign of King Mahādharmarājā. In 1577² it is definitely stated that the administration of the Order was then for the first time divided into a Northern and Southern division, an arrangement which continued thenceforward.

La Loubère³ seems to have been rather imperfectly informed on the condition of the Church in King Nārāyaṇa's reign; but anything in the nature of a hierarchy was probably as yet embryonic, since it seems to have escaped his notice. He distinguished only "*Tchaou-Vat*" (*cǎu vāt*) and "*Sancrats*" (*saṅgharājas*), both of which "superiors" were heads of monasteries, but the "*sancrats*" were of higher degree and alone had power to ordain persons entering the Order. None of these "superiors", however, had jurisdiction over any other, though the "*sancrat*" of the palace monastery was most respected of all.

In the reign of King Rāma IV, perhaps largely as a result of the king's influence, the Church seems definitely to have reached a higher state of organization which was as follows: The active chief of the Church, the *Samtec Brah Saṅgharāja* or Patriarch, was selected from the four *Samtec Brah Rāja Gaṇaḥ* or *Cǎu Gaṇaḥ*

¹ *AA.*, vol. i, p. 97.

² *AA.*, vol. i, p. 114.

³ *L. L.*, p. 114.



Hy'ai, who themselves were appointed from among the large number of *rāja gaṇaḥ* or heads of royal monasteries. Each *Cāu Gaṇaḥ Hy'ai* had a deputy or assistant of higher rank than any other monk except, of course, the *Cāu Gaṇaḥ Hy'ai* himself, and together each *Cāu Gaṇaḥ Hy'ai* and his assistant administered one of the following four great departments into which the Order at that time was divided: (1) the Northern Division having jurisdiction over all monasteries of the *Mahānikāya* (unreformed) sect in Siam, north of Bangkok; (2) the Southern Division, including all monasteries of the *Mahānikāya* sect in Siam, south of Bangkok (this being the arrangement we have mentioned as first established in 1577); (3) the *Vipāsanādhuraḥ*, or hermit monks, who, while belonging to the *Mahānikāya* sect, gave themselves up to contemplation and meditation and thus differed from the main body of the monks of this sect who formed divisions (1) and (2) and were *Gānthadhuraḥ*, that is to say, devoted themselves to study and teaching; (4) the newly constituted *Dhammayuttikā*, or reformed sect founded by King Rāma IV, which differed from the *Mahānikāya* mainly in details of discipline.

The *rāja gaṇaḥ*, or heads of the royal monasteries, were appointed with ceremony by the king at the beginning of every reign, which traditional act was called *sāsanūpathāmabhākica*.¹ Each *rāja gaṇaḥ* had two officials to assist him in administering his monastery, a *braḥ grū thānānukram* and *palāt*. The ordinary monasteries were similarly governed, but by monks of lower rank. Their heads were known as *aḥdhikāra*, and each was assisted by a *palāt* and *samuhapāñjī* (registrar).

The *aḥdhikāra* and other officials of the ordinary monasteries were appointed by the people or nobles

¹ Prince Damrong (2), p. 41.



who had given their money for founding the institution, but in the case of royal monasteries, the king (through the medium of the *Kram Dharmakāra*) appointed monks to the various ecclesiastical offices, and also gave the appropriate *śūkti nā*, *yaśa*, *rājadinnāma* and insignia of rank, as with lay officials.¹ In choosing suitable monks to fill the offices in the royal monasteries, the king took into consideration the proficiency of the candidates in the Pāli scriptures; and to this end a great examination was held every three years under the royal auspices in the neighbourhood of the palace. Several hundred monks, considered efficient by the heads of their monasteries, came together from all parts of the country, and submitted to an examination lasting nine days, by a committee of learned *rāja gaṇaḥ*, the *Cāu Gaṇaḥ Hyai* for the Northern Division superintending the examination of candidates from the South, while the *Cāu Gaṇaḥ Hyai* of the Southern Division had charge of those from the North. Those candidates who passed the examination were admitted to the degree of *parian*, of four grades which carried with them small monthly payments from the treasury. The highest grade was known as *mahā-parian*, from which the highest appointments were usually made. *Vipāsanādhuraḥ* monks never took part in these examinations, hence one of their members was very rarely made *Sanḥharāja*. It

¹ According to the hierarchy laws (Bradley, i, p. 198) Buddhist monks had *śūkti nā* grade as follows:—

<i>Sāmaṇera</i> (novices), cognizant with the <i>Dharma</i>	300
<i>Sāmaṇera</i> , not cognizant with the <i>Dharma</i>	200
<i>Bhikṣu</i> , cognizant with the <i>Dharma</i>	600
<i>Bhikṣu</i> , not cognizant with the <i>Dharma</i>	400
<i>Brah Grū</i> , cognizant with the <i>Dharma</i>	2,400
<i>Brah Grū</i> , not cognizant with the <i>Dharma</i>	1,000

Lay temple guardians cognizant with the *Dharma* had *śūkti nā* grade 200, while those who were not cognizant had only 100. In the same way the ordinary Brahmans (i.e. those not holding high official rank) were given a *śūkti nā* grade of 400 if they were familiar with the *śilpasūtras*, otherwise only 200.



may be said in passing that this royal examination was probably the nearest approach Siam ever made until the advent of Western education, to anything in the nature of a university activity. Its existence, and the wide influence that the monasteries had had for centuries as places where all male children received a rudimentary secular and religious education from the monks, paved the way for the introduction of a European system of education.

The *Saṅgharāja* does not appear to have exercised his jurisdiction over the other monks and monasteries in any strongly defined manner, if at all. He made reports on religious matters to the king from time to time, and presided over assemblies such as that which undertook the revision of the *Tripitaka* carried out in the first reign. Breaches of discipline among the monks were judged by the heads of their monasteries, or by the ecclesiastical courts under the control of the *Samtec Braḥ Rāja Gaṇaḥ* of the Northern and Southern Divisions, who inflicted mild but degrading punishments. In the case of serious crime the monk was first unfrocked, and then handed over to the secular court known as the *Śāla Kraḥḍrvaṇ Dharmakāra*, constituted specially to deal with such cases, where the criminal was judged by lay judges called *sāṅgharī*, or in extreme cases by the king himself.

Further steps in the formation of a centralized Church hierarchy, such as the constitution of an Assembly consisting of the *Cāu Kaṇaḥ Hyai* and their deputies, to discuss religious questions, and to act as a final Court of Appeal for religious cases, and the appointment of heads of all the monasteries in each circle and province, were taken in 1903. But these belong to the modern era of development in Siam, which is outside the scope of the present work.



CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

* In the preceding pages we have studied the various branches of the Siamese administrative system as it evolved from a primitive undifferentiated feudal form in the thirteenth century until, following a reorganization in the fifteenth, it assumed its definitive shape. This we have seen was brought about by effecting a change in the basis of the feudal system from a territorial to a personal one, with the accompanying metamorphosis of the nobles into an official class; and the highly complex system thus brought into being was particularly characterized by the formation of functionally differentiated government departments. We have observed, as closely as the material at our disposal would allow, the working of the administration both during the period of its active growth and that of its decadence. In concluding the work we may here notice a little more closely some of the underlying theoretical ideas that have revealed themselves more or less distinctly during the course of our study; and we may endeavour to draw attention to some of the causes of the strength and of the weakness of the system. It certainly forms no part of our task to attempt to foretell the future; but it may serve a useful purpose to indicate in some measure the way in which a study of the past of Siam may be of value to those whose concern is with its future.

The theory of the divine kingship was probably inseparable from the ideas of government which the Thai received from the Khmers; and it was no doubt valuable to the king in assisting him to enforce his rule in



a more extensive kingdom by adding to the power of his personality. But it resulted in the Khmer relationship between monarch and subject, which resembled that of a master and his servant, doing much to obscure the old Thai relationship which was more like that of father and son. In place of the trust and mutual respect which had characterized the dealings of monarch and vassal in the old feudal days, the relations of the various members of the body politic became pervaded with an atmosphere of fear, suspicion and jealousy. Again, being identified with a deity, the idea, which would have been impossible under patriarchal rule, grew up that the function of the ruler was to "eat his realm", whether it was expressed by the indigenous term *kīn mo'an* or by the more polite imported phrase *svey rājasampāṭi*.

While these ideas prevailed, it is not perhaps surprising that some of the kings of Ayudhyā were given up to self-indulgence or were, so far as we can judge them, apparently monsters of cruelty, while others were perhaps more usually occupied in waging war, collecting revenue for their own use, and forcing the people to work for them in the construction of temples and palaces, than in doing much to ameliorate the lot of their subjects. Yet that this was not always the case is amply witnessed by many references in the records that have survived from that period. Not only is the pious wish to protect the Buddhist religion frequently uttered, but the expression "for the welfare and happiness of the people" is of not uncommon occurrence in the edicts of the kings of Ayudhyā; and one gathers that it was inability rather than lack of desire that prevented the king from protecting the people from the oppression of the officials. It would indeed be uncharitable to look for a selfish motive behind the many wise measures



promulgated by these kings; and, even where self-preservation was definitely the first concern of a monarch, one must remember that he was so infinitely the most important member of the body politic that the fate of the state was often inextricably bound up in his own. It is true, however, that for the full reawakening of the Thai spirit of paternal rule, with its unqualified desire to further the welfare of the people for their own sake, Siam had to await the coming of the present dynasty, the founder of which placed it on record that "in undertaking to restore the monastery (Vāt Braḥ Jetavana) and in fitly dedicating it, His Majesty has not been actuated by a wish for reward (in future lives) such as Universal sovereignty or even heavenly joys, but by an aspiration to arrive at full and complete Knowledge whereby human beings will be restored from the wheel of misery".¹ In later reigns King Rāma I's successors translated this worthy aspiration into action, thus paving the way for the coming of the new Siam.

There is reason to believe, however, that Siam has much to be thankful for, both to the administrative system as reorganized by King Paramatrailokanātha, and to the Khmer ideas on the divine kingship that were introduced about that time; for those were stern days which often demanded the sacrifice of the individual for the good of the state, and apparent harshness of rule was often engendered by bitter necessity. It was indeed due to the assimilation of these foreign cultural influences, combined with their own inherent qualities, that the Thai of Ayudhyā succeeded in establishing a settled and united nation, strong enough to repel the attacks of jealous neighbours, and in a position to carry on trade with the principal commercial

¹ *The Inscriptions of Wat Phra Jetubon*, by H.H. Prince Dhani Nivat, in *JSS.*, xxvi, pt. 2, October, 1932, p. 145.



nations of the world; and it was the strength and cohesion thus acquired which aided them, even after decadence had set in, to survive seemingly overwhelming disasters and maintain their social and national integrity to the present day.

What then, one may ask, was the cause of the setting in of that decadence which finally brought the administrative system into a state of chaos, and why did this deterioration make its appearance so relatively soon after the system had reached its full development? The answer to this appears to be that the system, at least in Siamese hands, seems to have been capable of functioning only in a comparatively small state, and under a powerful ruler possessed of the confidence and respect of his subjects in the fullest degree. As the Siamese kingdom gradually expanded in area, the requisite degree of centralization was only achieved at the expense of a loss of that functional differentiation, or division of labour, that was an essential characteristic of the system. This change brought inefficiency and a host of abuses in its train. At the same time weak kings and long periods of peace undermined the power of the government to such an extent that it could only be restored by the most able monarchs, and then only temporarily. The division of the judicial functions and of the collection of revenue amongst many departments is eloquent not only of the rapacity and lack of co-operation of the officials, who received no salaries and had to earn their living as best they could, but also of the king's fear of placing too much power in the hands of any one official. Again, the endless series of checks which it was endeavoured to provide by making every official the spy over his colleague clearly indicates that no individual was deemed worthy of trust. A system which had served its purpose in earlier centuries had



so far degenerated that it had become unworkable and unmanageable when it was courageously swept away by King Rāma V.

This truly great and good ruler, in introducing his many reforms, restored to the Thai nation the freedom that was theirs of right, and began the task of educating the official class up to a sense of responsibility and trust. To this the masses of the people were quick to respond with a spontaneous manifestation of affection, and a new atmosphere of mutual understanding was created. In following in the footsteps of their royal father and worthily maintaining his ideals, King Rāma V's successors have done much to prepare the way for the adoption of a democratic form of government.

The future of the Siamese people is doubtless beset with pitfalls, for the political education of the officials is by no means perfected, and that of the masses has hardly yet begun. Those to whom it is given to guide the future destinies of Siam, therefore, may do well to give heed to the lessons which the records of the past have to teach. Thus may they be enabled to distinguish between those abuses which are the legacies of an outworn administrative machine and which may be removed by judicious reform; and those more deep-seated ills that may be traced to racial or climatic causes, and may consequently be eradicated only by the most patient and sympathetic educational methods. Finally, given reasonably favourable conditions and fair treatment from without, one feels that the outlook for the future of the Siamese should be bright, for have they not, as Prince Damrong has so justly remarked, three great national characteristics: *Love of National Independence*, which in the past has enabled them to weather the gravest political storms and maintain their autonomy alone among the nations of south-eastern Asia;



Toleration, both of the religions and of the customs of foreigners who have ever enjoyed the hospitality of their friendly land; and *Power of Assimilation*, which led them in earlier days to adopt those features of Indian and Khmer culture that they found best suited to their needs, and which characteristic may well stand them in good stead during the present transition.



LIST OF THE MORE IMPORTANT KINGS MENTIONED IN THIS WORK

(Dates in accordance with Wood's *History of Siam*)

Sukhodaya Period

<i>Title.</i>	<i>Reigned (A.D.)</i>
Śrī Indrāditya	about 1238—about 1270
Rāma Gāmhèn	about 1275—about 1317

Ayudhyā Period

Rāmādhīpati I	1350—1567
Paramarājā II	1424—1448
Paramatrailokanātha	1448—1488
Rāmādhīpati II	1491—1529
Brah Jaiyarājā	1534—about 1546
Cākrabartī	1549—1569
Nareśvara	1590—1605
Ekādaśaraṭha	1605—1610
Draṇ Dharma	1610—1628
Prāsāda Dōn	1628—1656
Nārāyaṇa	1657—1688
Bedarājā	1688—1703
Dāy Srah	1709—1733

Dhanapuri Period

Tāk	1767—1782
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Bangkok Period

Rāma I	1782—1809
Rāma II	1809—1824
Rāma III	1824—1851
Rāma IV (Mahāmañkuṭ)	1851—1868
Rāma V (Culālanakaraṇa)	1868—1910



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